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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAMMATIC SECTION 4(f) EVALUATION FOR

WEEKSVILLE - WEST

PROJECT STPP 6-1(56)62
(P.M.S. CONTROL #2014)
LENGTH – 10.5 KILOMETERS (6.5 MILES)
IN
SANDERS COUNTY

This document is prepared in conformance with Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) requirements and contains the information required for an Environmental Assessment under the provisions of Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 18.2.237(2) (3) and 18.2.239. It is also prepared in conformance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements and contains the information required for an Environmental Assessment under 23 CFR 771.119.

**Submitted pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 4332(2) (C), 49 U.S.C. 303 for section 4(f) and sections 2-3-104, 75-1-201, M.C.A.
by the U.S. Department of Transportation**

Federal Highway Administration

and

Montana Department of Transportation

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Submitted By: Jean A. Riley Date: 1/16/02
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Environmental Services

Reviewed and Approved
for Distribution By: Date: 1/16/02
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PROJECT STPP 6-1(56)62
(P.M.S. CONTROL # 2014)

IN

SANDERS COUNTY

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JANUARY 2002

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STPP 6-1(56)62
C.N. 2014

WEEKSVILLE - WEST

1. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

1.1 Description

This proposed action is located on Montana Highway 200 (Primary Route P-6) along generally rolling terrain in the Clark Fork River Valley in Sanders County. The proposed action begins at milepost (MP) 62.2± approximately 17.70 kilometers (km) (11 mi) southeast of Thompson Falls and extends in an easterly direction for 10.5 km (6.5 mi) to the Weeksville Creek Crossing. The project is located in section 25 in T21N R28W, sections 30, 29, 32, 33, 34 in T21N R27W and sections 4, 3, and 2 in T20N R27W M.P.M. The existing roadway is classified as a minor arterial.

The western 5.63 km (3.5 mi) of the roadway corridor runs through rolling terrain, transitioning into high, steep rocky cliffs and a large talus (loose rock) slope to the north for approximately 0.32 km (.2 mi). The eastern 4.83 km (3 mi) of the project runs through relatively flat terrain with occasional short sections of rock cliffs north of the roadway. Montana Rail Link (MRL) railroad generally parallels the existing roadway and is located within less than 30 meters (m) (100 ft) south of the highway for approximately 4.20 km (2.6 mi). The project vicinity and limits are shown on Figure 1.

Two (2) creeks exist on the project. Munson Creek crosses the roadway through a concrete box culvert at MP 62.3± and Weeksville Creek crosses the roadway through twin concrete box culverts at MP 68.5. An old meander cut off of the Clark Fork River is located at MP 65.5± on the north side of the roadway.

Several irrigation crossings exist on the project including the Mass ditch, east of Munson Creek at the beginning of the project and several pipelines and irrigation crossings in the vicinity of the Lawyers Nursery located at MP 66.2. The Mass ditch is covered under a programmatic agreement and no determination for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility is required.

The horizontal alignment will generally follow the existing alignment with shifting of alignment to avoid the MRL railroad tracks and to provide for maintenance of traffic flow during construction. A 100 kilometer/hour (km/h) 60 mile per hour (mph) design speed will be utilized for standards throughout the project with the exception of a 90 km/h (55 mph) design speed in the large talus slope and rock cliff areas known as 'Bad Rock' located between MP 64.3 and MP 64.8 due to physical constraints of the rock cliffs, MRL Railroad and Clark Fork River. The proposed roadway for the majority of the project will consist of a rural section with standard cut and fill slopes meeting current standards. An elevated typical section will be utilized in the large talus slope area and rock cliff areas with designed rock cut slopes. No realignment of the MRL railroad is anticipated. Work will include, but is not limited to; rock blasting, grading, gravel surfacing, plant mix bituminous surfacing, replacement of hydraulic structures, relocation of irrigation structures, scenic turnouts, mailbox turnouts, signing, striping, fencing, seeding, right-of-way (R/W) acquisition, utility relocation, detours and traffic control.

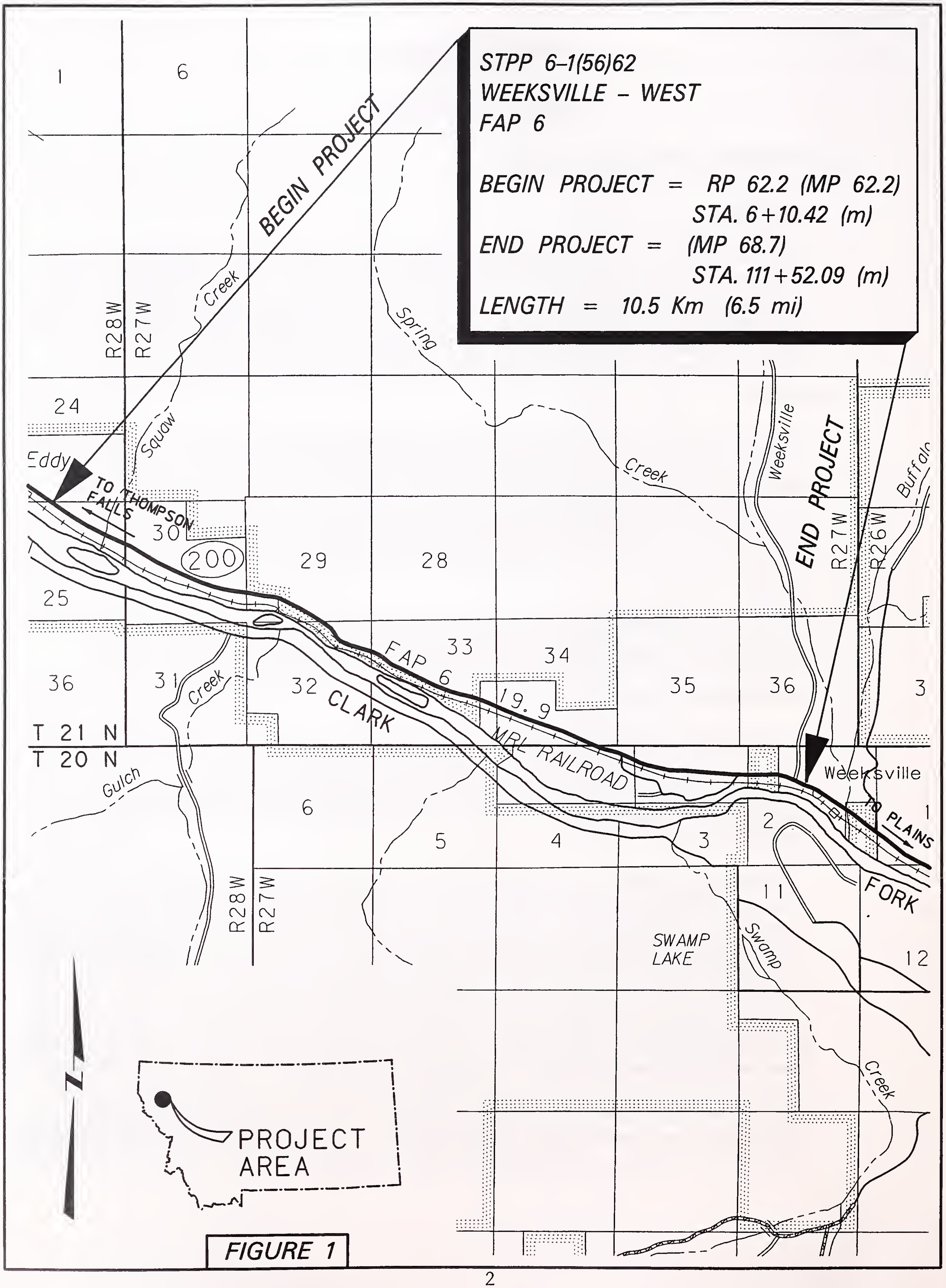

STPP 6–1(56)62
WEEKSVILLE - WEST
FAP 6
BEGIN PROJECT = RP 62.2 (MP 62.2)
STA. 6+10.42 (m)
END PROJECT = (MP 68.7)
STA. 111+52.09 (m)
LENGTH = 10.5 Km (6.5 mi)
BEGIN PROJECT
END PROJECT
1
6
24
25
36
30
29
28
31
32
33
34
35
36
3
6
5
4
3
2
1
11
12
R28W
R27W
R27W
R26W
T 21 N
T 20 N
Creek
Squaw
Spring
Creek
Eddy
TO THOMPSON FALLS
200
FAP 6
19.9
CLARK
FORK
MRL RAILROAD
Creek
Gulch
Weeksville
Weeksville
Buffalo
TO PLAINS
SWAMP LAKE
Swamp
Creek
N
PROJECT AREA

FIGURE 1

1.2 Roadway Surface Widths

The roadway will be widened to provide a 9.6 m (32 ft) finished roadway width. The roadway will consist of two 3.6 m (12-ft) driving lanes and two 1.2 m (4-ft) shoulders with the exception of the 'Bad Rock' area between MP 64.3 and MP 64.8. The 'Bad Rock' area will consist of two 3.6 m (12 ft) driving lanes and two 2.4 m (8 ft) shoulders to facilitate jersey barrier and still maintain a 1.2 m (4 ft) effective shoulder. Special design features will be utilized through the large talus slope and rock cliff areas to reduce rock fall impacts to the railroad and highway to the south and bighorn sheep habitat to the north (see Chapter 4, Section 4.11).

1.3 Rock Cuts

Major rock cuts will be required at the following locations:

MP 64.6± Left
MP 67.4± Left
MP 67.5± Left
MP 68.1± Left
MP 68.3± Left

1.4 Rock Fall Mitigation

The area ('Bad Rock') between MP 64.3 and MP 64.8 will incorporate permanent rock fall mitigation measures (see Figure 2). A mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) wall system with continuous sacrificial timber facing will be used on the up slope (north) side of the wall to provide protection from rock fall impacts.

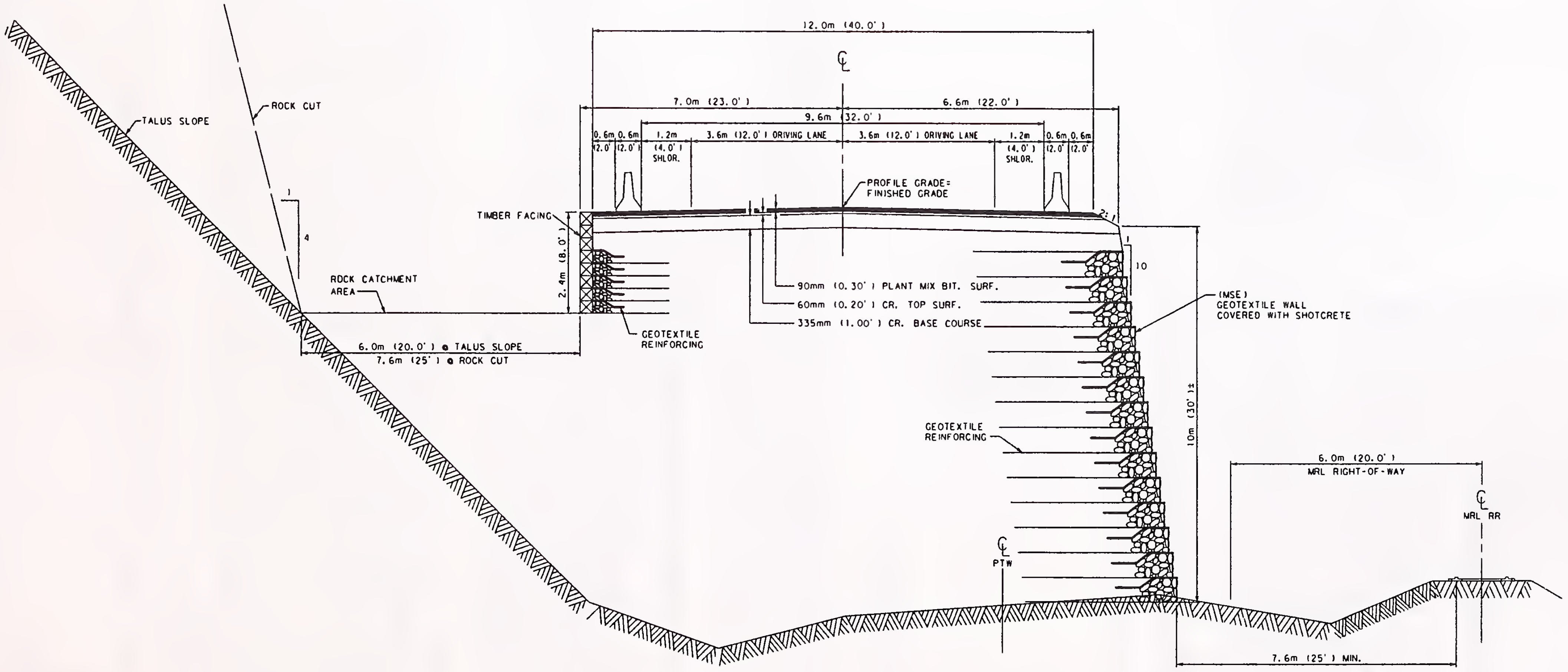
1.5 Mechanically Stabilized Earth (MSE) Wall System

The talus slope through the 'Bad Rock' area (see description on page 5) controls both the vertical and horizontal alignment. In order to prevent undercutting of the talus slope, allow for construction of a rock catchment area, provide horizontal distance for the width of the highway, and stay within proposed Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) R/W, a retaining structure will be required to support a raised highway.

The MSE wall system, or more specifically a Geosynthetic Reinforced Soil (GRS) wall system will be composed of a geotextile reinforcement and protective wall facing. The system will be used to support embankment fills using a geotextile mat that extends back into the fill a determined distance from the wall face. The mat is wrapped around the fill lifts and doubles back into the fill at the next higher lift elevation. In order to protect the geotextile wall from ultraviolet rays on the downhill (south) side, the wall surface will be covered with shotcrete, reinforced with a welded wire mesh. The welded wire mesh is hung in front of the wall face, attached to the geotextile lifts as each lift is constructed and becomes an integral part of the shotcrete section.

A conceptual design of the wall, showing the position of the wall and roadway is shown in Figure 2.

DETAIL
"BAD ROCK ELEVATED ROAD SECTION"



SECTION

FIGURE 2

2. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

2.1 Existing Conditions

The highway corridor is located in the Clark Fork River Valley with gently rolling terrain at the eastern end, and steep, mountainous terrain at the western end of project. Land use in the corridor includes agriculture, logging and recreation. Residences are randomly scattered throughout the project with a few residences located at the mountainous western end of the project and more residences located in the eastern end of the project. A nursery (Lawyer Nursery) is located north of and adjacent to the roadway at MP 66.2. The present roadway was constructed in two separate sections as Forest Highway Projects (FHP). The western section from MP 62.2 to MP 64.7 was constructed in 1934 under FHP 6 K. The eastern section from MP 64.7 to MP 68.7) was constructed in 1938 under FHP 6 A.

Projects FHP 6 K and FHP 6 A were constructed to a 7.3 m (24 ft) top paved width with 50 to 100 millimeters (mm) (2 to 4 in) of plant mix surfacing over 130 to 200 mm (5 to 8 in) of gravel base course. The roadway appears to have had only minor maintenance since the original construction. The original section was recently experiencing severe rutting and potholing particularly due to Yellowstone Pipeline trucks transporting oil on MT 200 around the Flathead Indian Reservation. The roadway received a 50mm (2") asphalt overlay in the fall of 1996 as a temporary roadway improvement. Existing fill slopes vary from 4:1 to 1½:1 (horizontal to vertical) in areas of higher fills, with cut slopes generally 2:1 and steeper in the vicinity of the talus slopes and rock cliffs.

The area locally known as 'Bad Rock' between MP 64.3± and MP 64.8± was named by the white settlers in the area since the rock cliffs extended to the river, prohibiting travel. The 'Bad Rock' trail was built to traverse the cliffs and took approximately one day to traverse. The 'Bad Rock' area has a history of rock fall problems as evidenced by the electrified warning fence along the MRL railroad tracks and by the damage to the guardrail along the highway. The proposed alignment through this section will incorporate rock fall mitigation measures.

The current posted speed limit is 70 mph (110 km/h) daytime and 65 mph (105 km/h) nighttime for passenger vehicles and 60 mph (100 km/h) daytime and 55 mph (90 km/h) nighttime for trucks. Twenty-three (23) vertical curves exist within the project boundaries. Seven (7) crest vertical curves and four (4) sag vertical curves do not meet absolute minimum stopping sight distance for the proposed 100 km/h (60 mph) design speed. Seven (7) of the substandard vertical curves are located at the eastern end of the project between MP 67.8± and MP 68.7±. Grades steeper than 4% occur at three (3) locations with a maximum grade of 6% located near the beginning of the project at MP 62.6±.

Thirteen (13) horizontal curves exist within the project boundaries. The maximum degree of curvature within the project is 6° 00' (290 m radii) in the vicinity of the large talus slope at MP 64.7±. Two (2) of the curves on the project are spiral curves located at the eastern end of the project.

2.2 Need

Regional destinations include Kalispell and the Flathead Valley to the northeast, Missoula to the southeast and Idaho to the west. The purpose of the proposed project is to meet current and projected traffic volumes. The proposed project is not anticipated to increase development or traffic volumes.

The existing roadway does not meet current design standards for existing and projected traffic volumes for roadway width and horizontal and vertical alignment. Roadway features that will be upgraded for safety reasons and traffic needs by this project are; flattening of fill slopes, widening the roadway to 9.6 m (32 ft), correcting the super-elevation of horizontal curves, as well as horizontal and vertical alignment meeting a 100 km/h (60 mph) design speed throughout the project where practical. The section of roadway needs to be improved with a new riding surface, widening of the roadway and improved sight and stopping distances. Guardrail will be required in several areas due to steep fill slopes.

Traffic data is as follows:

The corridor receives moderate traffic primarily related to industries in the area and local access. Summer time traffic volumes increase due to recreation and tourism in the area. Regional destinations include Kalispell and the Flathead Valley to the northeast, Missoula to the southeast and Idaho to the west. Current and projected traffic statistics for the project are as follows:

2001 ADT = 1470 (Present Average Daily Traffic)
2002 ADT = 1510 (Letting Date)
2022 ADT = 2840 (Design Year Traffic)
DHV = 370 (Design Hourly Volume)
T = 13% (Trucks, Heavy and Medium)
18 Kip EAL's = 177.09 (Equivalent Axle Loads-Daily)
Growth rate = 3.2 % annual

A review of the accident data for an eleven (11) year period indicates an accident rate of 1.36 accidents per million vehicle miles and an accident severity rate of 1.39 for the period 1980 - 1990. These compare to the statewide average accident rate of 1.60 and statewide average severity rate of 1.54 for all primary highways. The truck accident rate was 0.23 with a severity rate of 1.20 for the period, while the statewide averages for trucks on primary routes are 1.47 and 1.55 respectively.

The only variation from the average occurrence was that 58% of all accidents were off-road, compared to the statewide average of 44%. No single cause was determined for the variation, therefore no recommendations were made.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternative alignments are seriously limited by the steep, rugged mountains and cliffs of the Cabinet mountains to the north, the MRL Railroad and Clark Fork River immediately south and parallel to the roadway, and the rugged Coeur D'Alene mountains south of the Clark Fork River. The project area consists primarily of a narrow strip of MRL R/W and private land paralleling the Clark Fork River surrounded by large blocks of Forest Service land.

Alternate alignments to the north and to the south of the Clark Fork River were considered but are not considered reasonable nor prudent due to constructability problems and high construction costs associated with the steep terrain and the significant amount of R/W required through national forest land.

Because the existing highway corridor is a long established route effectively serving the local residents as well as tourist traffic, no location alternatives have any advantage over the existing highway corridor for this project.

Using the present corridor will allow maximum use of existing R/W and easements and will minimize the amount of land affected.

3.1 No-Build Alternative

The "no-build" or "do nothing" alternate would leave the roadway in its present condition. This would result in no activities beyond the continued routine maintenance of the existing facility. This alternate would not provide a facility capable of handling the existing or projected traffic volumes, reduce maintenance costs, nor enhance safety for this stretch of roadway.

Impacts

The no-build alternative would result in minimal impacts to the environment. No widening of the roadway or slope flattening would allow the roadside to remain unchanged. Maintenance costs and traffic accidents will continue to increase with an increase in average daily traffic (ADT).

Construction cost of the “no-build” alternative is “$0.00”.

3.2 Preferred Alternative

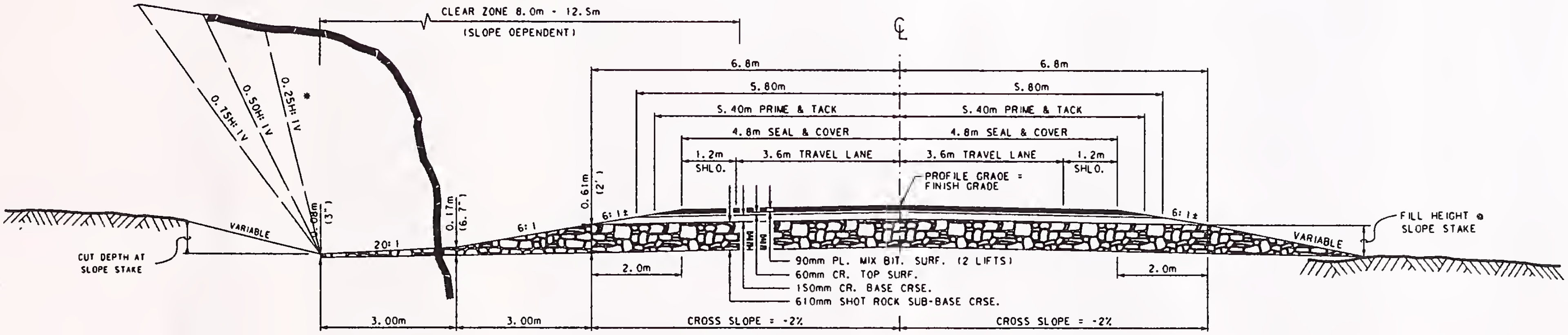
Generally, the preferred alternative alignment follows the existing alignment in the highway corridor with vertical and horizontal alignment changes and offsets from the existing centerline to meet current design standards and provide clearance from the MRL railroad.

The preferred alternative will widen the roadway from 7.3 m (24 ft) to 9.6 m (32 ft), flatten inslopes, and remove obstacles from the clear zone (see Figure 3). Cut and fill slopes as well as horizontal and vertical alignment will meet current design standards where practical. A design exception will be obtained in areas where design standards cannot be met due to physical constraints, excessive construction costs, or excessive R/W requirement. Guardrail will be utilized throughout where warranted.

Impacts

The impacts of the preferred alternative are examined in Chapter 4, Environmental Impacts. The techniques that will minimize impacts include utilizing guardrail in areas of high fill and wetlands as well as use of specially designed cut and fill slopes in the talus slope and rock cliff areas, reducing construction limits which reduce rock excavation and impacts to bighorn sheep habitat.

Construction cost of the “Preferred” alternative is estimated between $10.0 and $12.0 million dollars including R/W acquisition.



TYPICAL SECTION

FIGURE 3

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The proposed project involves the upgrading and widening of an existing facility to meet current and anticipated travel needs. The relationship between the local short-term uses of man's environment and maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity has been considered as discussed below. There will be some short-term impacts to the environment during construction of the project.

4.1 Social and Economic

Existing Environment

The proposed project is located at the base of the Cabinet Mountains in the Clark Fork River Valley. The area surrounding the roadway consists of approximately 4.02 km (2.5 mi) of Lolo National Forest System Lands, with the remaining land in private ownership. The highway corridor is generally sparsely inhabited. The roadway is located on an easement from Montana Rail Link except for the section from MP 62.1± to MP 63.9±.

Currently, the highway provides access to the Clark Fork River valley as well as Forest Service trails and roads. There are two scenic turnouts within the project limits which are also used for sheep viewing areas. The turnouts are located on the north side of the roadway at MP 62.4 and MP 64.9.

The MT 200 highway corridor is used extensively by both local residents and tourists. Logging companies, Forest Service, and other state agencies and residents use the highway to access adjacent lands. Logging and commercial truck traffic is relatively high.

Two businesses are located within the proposed project corridor adjacent to the roadway. Only one business, the Lawyer Nursery will be affected by the proposed project.

The Lawyer Nursery is located adjacent to and north of the proposed project at MP 66.1 with nursery stock located on MRL leased land between MP 66.0 and MP 66.9 adjacent to and south of the roadway. The Lawyer Nursery operation is the corporate headquarters for Lawyer Nursery, Inc., which has facilities in western Montana and western Washington. Lawyer Nursery supplies wholesale field grown nursery stock throughout the United States and abroad, consisting mainly of deciduous seedlings and transplants, rootstocks, ornamental shrubs, budded fruit trees, flowering crabs and some conifers. Lawyer Nursery is one of the largest, if not the largest, employer in the Clark Fork River Valley with 60 to 65 full time personnel in Montana and as many as 150 seasonal and full time employees during the peak season in a county (Sanders) which consists of a total population of only 10,233 (1999 census).

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

The proposed construction will significantly improve the existing highway and will not have adverse impacts on existing public services, facilities, minority groups, or neighborhoods.

Any impact that does occur will be beneficial as the new highway will provide a more efficient route for school buses, mail carriers, ambulances, and any other public service vehicles which serve the area. The flow of traffic will be improved but the overall traffic patterns will not change. The proposed construction will provide a safer, more efficient transportation facility for the traveling public.

The proposed reconstruction following the existing alignment has been selected to minimize disturbance of residences and businesses located adjacent to the existing highway while avoiding MRL railroad tracks. It is anticipated that no residences or businesses will be relocated due to this project.

Impacts to the Lawyer Nursery operation will be minimized by shifting the alignment to the north, away from the nursery stock south of the roadway and towards the business facilities. However, as a result of the alignment shift, some impacts to the nursery will be unavoidable including; the Lawyer Nursery seed storage building will need to be relocated, parking facilities will be relocated and landscape improvements will be removed. As a result of the alignment shift, impacts to the adjacent nursery stock on the MRL lease will be minimized. The MRL lease is an annual lease which is revocable at any time. A short section of trees (willows and possibly crab apple) south of the roadway between MP 66.75 and MP 66.85 will be relocated due to encroachment from construction limits. Both tree species that will be transplanted have been identified as not being difficult to transplant or relocate. The majority of the impacted nursery stock is located outside the MRL lease and is encroaching on MDT R/W without an agreement or lease.

As a result of the mitigation measures proposed, disruption to the Lawyer Nursery operations and its employees will be minimized. All required nursery stock transplanting, building relocation and replacement of improvements will be completed prior to the roadway reconstruction. However, some inconvenience to the operation will be unavoidable due to the construction activities.

Improved scenic turnouts will include relocation to provide greater sight distance and signage, improving the safety of the roadway for the traveling public.

This project will have little or no impact on the long-term employment situation in the area. A slight increase in employment will occur during construction, benefiting the local economy. There will be minimal strain on available housing.

This proposed project is located primarily on an easement within MRL R/W with a portion of the project on private and national forest land. Additional R/W will be obtained as necessary to allow construction of the proposed facility. The major impact of the project will be to provide an adequate transportation facility to the traveling public, extend the existing roadway service life, enhance safety, and reduce future maintenance costs.

In summary, this project will have a positive social-economic impact throughout the corridor. Positive impacts will be realized in safety improvements and travel time reductions.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures that will be implemented to reduce impacts to the Lawyer Nursery operation include shifting of the alignment to the north between MP 65.8 and MP 67.1 to avoid transplanting of valuable nursery stock located south of the roadway on land leased from MRL by Lawyer Nursery. Nursery stock between MP 66.0 and MP 66.3 is Malus Roselow and Sorbus (Mountain Ash) identified as having a high value as well as being difficult to transplant. If transplanted, a ten (10) year period was estimated for reestablishing the species to at or near its current production level. In some cases, the production of the seed crop could fall significantly or would not recover within a ten (10) year or longer period.

In addition to the alignment shift away from the adjacent nursery stock and towards the Lawyer Nursery operation facilities, a number of additional mitigation measures were implemented to further reduce construction limits and resulting overall R/W widths and corresponding impacts to adjacent property.

Mitigation measures requiring a design exception implemented to reduce construction limits and impacts to the Lawyer Nursery from MP 66.0 to MP 66.9 include the following:

- Use of a 'barn roof' fill slope consisting of a 6:1 fill slope to the clear zone with a 3:1 recoverable slope beyond the clear zone.
- Utilize a v-ditch section without slope rounding in lieu of the standard 3.0 m flat bottom ditch with a 3.0 m slope rounding.
- Elimination of the requirement of 3.0 m plus the construction limit to the new R/W.

As a result of the proposed mitigation and minimization measures, no significant impacts are anticipated to the Lawyer Nursery operation or its employees.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would have no immediate impact on social or economic issues. However, increased traffic volumes could likely increase traffic accidents since motorists commonly stop in the middle of the roadway to view bighorn sheep. Additionally, the no build alternative would result in increased deterioration and maintenance of the roadway over time, resulting in increased impacts to the traveling public.

4.2 Land Use

Existing Environment

Current land use within the project area is predominately agricultural, residential, railroad, commercial and logging. Commercial uses include the Lawyer Nursery, located near the eastern end of the project at MP 66.1 with nursery trees being grown adjacent to the roadway on private land and land leased from Montana Rail Link railroad. Rural residences are randomly scattered adjacent to the roadway throughout the corridor. Railroad tracks essentially follow the roadway, located within close proximity for 4.18 km (2.6 mi) of the project south of the existing roadway.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

Impacts of the preferred alternative include additional easement, R/W and construction permits required throughout the project corridor. Power line relocation and underground telephone relocation is anticipated throughout the project.

The existing R/W is 24.38 m (80 ft) from MP 62.1± to MP 63.9±. From MP 63.9± to MP 68.7± the existing easement on MRL R/W varies from 24.38 m (80 ft) at the western end to 30.5 and 36.6 m (100 and 120 ft) at the eastern end with an easement as narrow as 4.3 m (14 ft) on the south side of the roadway at MP 64.5. New R/W will be acquired in areas of private and public land and additional easement will be necessary on the MRL R/W. R/W will be acquired from approximately twenty-five (25) landowners throughout the project in addition to the easement required from MRL. Of the 25 parcels, R/W acquisition from eleven (11) of the parcels is expected to exceed the MDT minor impact definition of greater than 10% acquisition of a parcel less than 10 hectares (ha) (25 acres) or greater than 1% acquisition of a parcel greater than 10 ha (25 acres).

R/W acquisition from parcels less than 10 ha (25 ac) in size vary from a minimum parcel size of 0.928 ha (2.293 ac) with 0.328 ha (0.81 ac) of R/W acquisition to a maximum parcel size of 8.525 ha (21.066 ac) with 1.801 ha (4.45 ac) of R/W acquisition.

R/W acquisition from parcels exceeding 10 ha (25 ac) in size vary from a minimum parcel size of 10.615 ha (26.23 ac) with 1.688 ha (4.17 ac) of R/W acquisition to a maximum parcel size of 25.901 ha (62.00 ac) with 0.595 ha (1.47 ac) of R/W acquisition.

Total area of R/W acquisition required for the project is estimated at 14.6 hectares (36 acres) excluding the MRL easement and 3.6 hectares (9 acres) of construction permits are anticipated for construction of the project.

Although R/W acquisition of eleven parcels is expected to exceed the minor impact definition, no relocation of residences or businesses is anticipated as a result of the proposed project. As part of the mitigation measures to reduce impacts to the Lawyer Nursery Operation, new R/W limits have been reduced to less than standard width. Additionally, the project corridor is sparsely inhabited with large areas of National Forest Land and uninhabited areas. As a result of the rural setting of the proposed project, R/W acquisition is not considered a significant impact.

All lands needed for R/W from private ownerships on this proposed project will be acquired by MDT in accordance with both the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-646), and the Uniform Relocation Act Amendments of 1987 (P.L. 100-17). Compensation for R/W acquisitions is made at "fair market value" for the "highest and best use" of the land.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would have no impact on the existing environment.

4.3 Prime or Unique Farmlands

Existing Environment

The existing alignment is bordered by tracts of prime, unique and important farmland, thereby making it impossible to reconstruct the roadway without acquisition of some farmland. The prime and unique farmland consists of hay, grain, pasture and nursery trees.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of Sanders County, Montana was contacted for site assessment and land evaluation along the MT 200 corridor. The NRCS has determined that 3.56 hectares (8.8 acres) of the land to be converted is prime and unique farmland while 0.0 acres is farmland of statewide and local importance. The majority of the areas where prime and unique farmland will be taken due to roadway construction are located towards the eastern end of the project from MP 66.0 to MP 67.9.

In compliance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA-7 U.S.C. 4201, et.seq.) coordination was completed with the NRCS to complete Form AD-1006 (the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating). The farmland to be converted has a relative value of 147 points. The USDA recommends that any site receiving a total score less than 160 points be given a minimum level of consideration for protection, and therefore, under 7CFR 658.4 (c) no alternate locations need to be evaluated under the Farmland Protection Policy Act. A copy of this completed form is in Appendix B.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would have no impact on prime or unique farmlands.

4.4 Floodplain

Existing Environment

The project corridor is located in the Clark Fork River Valley. The physiography of the region is a relatively flat valley bottom rising to steep mountains with several areas of loose rock slopes (talus slopes) and rock cliffs. The corridor contains numerous small pot holes, wetlands and several tributaries from the Cabinet Mountains to the north and the Coeur D'Alene Mountains to the south. The project crosses Munson Creek near the beginning of the project at MP 62.3 and Weeksville Creek near the end of the project at MP 68.5. The delineated floodplain for the Clark Fork River will not be encroached upon with the exception of an old meander cutoff of the Clark Fork River at MP 65.5. A 900 mm (36 in) pipe allows river high water to cross the existing roadway into the ponded area on the north side of the roadway. During the field review of the project it was noted that the invert elevation of the pipe was approximately 0.91 m (3 ft) higher in elevation than the river and the ponded area to the north. Possibly the elevation of the ponded area is fluctuating with the river elevation through fractured rock.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

Executive Order No. 11988 and Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) floodplain regulations (23 CFR 650, Subpart A) require an evaluation of this proposed action to determine if any of its alternatives encroach on the "base" floodplain. The "base" floodplain is defined as the area covered by water from a "100-year" flood. The "100-year" flood represents a flood event that has a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any year.

Impacts to the Munson Creek and Weeksville Creek crossings are unavoidable. The highway will have very little impact on the Munson Creek Floodplain. The project will have unavoidable impacts to the Weeksville Creek floodplain due to enchroachment into the existing channel from toe of fill slopes. Approximately 105 meters (344 ft) of existing channel will be realigned upstream of the proposed crossing. The total length of existing channel will be shortened by approximately 12 m (39 ft) due to the longer proposed culvert. The stream alignment has been located to avoid disturbance of the heavy scrub/shrub vegetation located adjacent to the stream. Mitigation measures include vegetation of reconstructed stream banks and transplanting of disturbed scrub/shrub vegetation. All instream work, including instream work on detours, will be completed between June 2 and August 31. Instream work will not be allowed between September 1 and June 1. There are no reasonable alternatives that would eliminate encroachment. Due to shifting of alignment and widening of the roadway, channel changes to the inlet and outlet of the new structures are anticipated. Hydraulically, no major impacts should be involved.

Floodplains for Weeksville Creek and Munson Creek have not been delineated. Encroachment on the floodplain at the old Clark Fork River meander will consist of minor floodplain encroachments due to fill slope limits. These areas have been evaluated during the project design for erosion potential with appropriate mitigation measures implemented. These areas will be monitored during construction for erosion.

Sanders County participates in the flood insurance program. A formal floodplain development permit will be required prior to beginning construction.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would have no impacts on floodplains.

4.5 Water Quality

Existing Environment

This project parallels the Clark Fork River as well as crossing two perennial creek drainages consisting of Munson Creek and Weeksville Creek. The project also bisects an old cut-off meander of the Clark Fork River.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

A minor temporary increase in water pollution is expected during the actual construction process. The contractor will be required to exercise every reasonable precaution throughout construction to prevent pollution of all waters located in the project vicinity. The contractor will also be required to meet the requirements of the applicable regulations of Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, Department of Environmental Quality, and other local, state or federal regulations for the prevention or abatement of water pollution. These include the applicable regulations under the Federal Clean Water Act of 1987. The controls of non-point source pollution will be implemented as directed under the Water Quality Act of 1987. This includes following all the permitting practices as specified in all applicable state and federal laws and regulations. There will be no adverse long-term effects on water quality resulting from this project.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would not impact the existing water quality.

4.6 Air Quality

Existing Environment

This proposed project is located in an "unclassifiable"/attainment area of Montana for air quality under 40 CFR 81.327, as amended. As such, this proposed project is not covered under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's **Final Rule** of November 24, 1993 on Air Quality conformity. Therefore, this proposed project complies with Section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act as amended **(42 U.S.C. 7521(a))**.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

A temporary increase in air pollution due to dust and fumes is expected as a result of construction operations. The contractor will be required to adhere to all federal, state, and local regulations to minimize this pollution. Air quality permits will be obtained from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Air and Waste Management Bureau for asphalt plants and crushers. Dust will be controlled by watering or other acceptable methods.

Air quality impacts after construction will consist mainly of exhaust emissions from motor vehicles, which will increase on this route as traffic volumes increase. Traffic volumes will increase regardless of the new construction.

The project is not in conflict with the State's Implementation Plan for achieving National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

The improved traffic flow provided by this project will tend to offset the potential increase in exhaust emissions which would therefore have a long-term beneficial effect on air quality.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would not impact the existing air quality. However, an increase in emissions is anticipated over time with an increase in traffic volumes.

4.7 Historical, Cultural, and Archaeological Resources

Existing Environment

A cultural resource inventory was performed along the highway corridor in April 1993 by GCM Services, Inc. of Butte, Montana. The Cultural Resource Survey located ten historic and/or prehistoric sites in the project corridor. In addition, two historic sites, one prehistoric site and one combination site had been previously recorded and were retested and recorded during the inventory. Of the historical, cultural and archeological sites inventoried, three historic sites, one prehistoric site and two combination historic/prehistoric sites, and one individual structure were determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). A determination was prepared by the Montana State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) on August 18, 1993 which concurred with the eligibility.

The one prehistoric site, Nelson Meadow (24SA1084), was previously identified, retested and re-recorded during the survey. One historic site, the G-1 Dump (24SA344) was identified and inventoried although an eligibility determination was not completed. Both the G-1 Dump (24SA344) and Nelson Meadow (24SA1084) are not impacted by the proposed project. The NRHP eligible historic sites include the Northern Pacific Railroad (24SA348), Munson Dump (24SA345), and Diehl Barn (24SA347). The two NRHP eligible prehistoric/historic sites include the Weeksville/Sears Site (24SA155) and Bad Rock Trail (24SA343). The NRHP eligible structure consists of a barn located at the Trudgen Place (24SA346).

The Northern Pacific Railroad (24SA348) played a key role in the travel up the Clark Fork River since 1883. As part of the Northern Pacific system, it played a role in national transportation and commerce. Locally, it brought settlers into the area and carried their farm and lumber products to market. The linear site qualifies for the NRHP under Criterion A. The masonry arch bridge over Weeksville Creek also qualifies under Criterion C.

The Munson Dump (24SA345) has been used on a regular basis during at least four distinct periods. The dump may have been a gravel source for railroad construction. It is also the site of an early sawmill which first used the gravel pit as a dump. Because several dumping areas are physically separated, little cross-temporal mixing of trash has occurred. Portions of the dump complex have the potential to reveal additional important information on the physical culture of the early lumber milling operation at Eddy. Due to the sites integrity, it is eligible to the NRHP under Criterion D.

The Trudgen Place (24SA346) is situated between the town of Eddy and the former town site of Weeksville on the first bench immediately above and to the north of the Clark Fork River. The site contains an extensively remodeled 1910 house, a timber barn, "bathroom", pumphouse and a modern metal garage originally used as a worm farm. The site has fair to poor integrity. However, the barn retains a high degree of integrity. The site has not been associated with any significant historical developments, events or persons and the site has little potential to reveal any important historical information. Only the barn constructed out of bridge timbers is of interest, while the other structures are neither typical nor unique. While the site as a whole is not eligible, the barn is uniquely constructed out of salvaged bridge timbers, a trait it shares with the nearby Diehl Barn (24SA347) which is eligible for the NRHP. The Trudgen Barn is individually eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C.

The Diehl Barn (24SA347) site is located at the former town site of Weeksville. The barn is associated with a 1910 farmstead and may have had some importance locally because of its association with the early wagon road, although this is not documented. Although the barn has seen some deterioration, the barn is uniquely constructed of salvaged bridge timbers, a trait it shares with the nearby timber bridge barn located at the Trudgen Place (24SA346) which is individually eligible for the NRHP. The material from at least two bridges was adapted for reuse in the interesting timber frame/peg construction. The Diehl Barn is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C.

The Weeksville/Sears site (24SA155) is located immediately south of the junction of the Weeksville Creek road with Highway 200. The site is an extensive prehistoric occupation and may also contain the remains of the railroad town of Weeksville. The town of Weeksville is significant in the local history, being founded in 1882 with the construction of a sawmill and small store as a result of construction activity on the Northern Pacific Railroad. The town's demise began with the completion of the railroad.

The Weeksville/Sears Site (24SA155) contains subsurface cultural material representing both historic and prehistoric components. The presence of subsurface artifacts suggests the site has the potential to reveal important prehistoric and historic information. The historic materials may provide information on the physical culture of the town of Weeksville. Based on the prehistoric materials which span a 10,000 year time period and the associated feature(s), the site appears to have the potential to provide dates of occupation, season of occupation, intransite patterns and information on hearth and feature types. The site is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion D.

The Bad Rock Trail (24SA343) consists of a prehistoric foot trail segment over Bad Rock. The site played a key role in the early travel up the Clark Fork River. The Bad Rock area proved to be a major impediment to the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1881-1883. Although the lower and eastern portions of the trail have been obliterated, enough of the trail remains to provide the site with good integrity. Although no lithic or other cultural material were present, the site has a very high probability of containing important prehistoric information. Therefore, the trail qualifies for the NRHP under Criteria A, C, and D.

Effects of Preferred Alternative

A Determination of Effect (DOE) document has been completed by MDT and approved by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and concludes the following:

Nelson Meadow (24SA1084) (MP 62.7).

This site is located approximately 107 m (350 ft) south of the proposed alignment and will not be impacted by the proposed project. No further consideration was given and a determination of effect was not required for this site under the DOE document.

Northern Pacific Railroad (24SA348) (MP 68.5).

There would be **No Effect** to the Northern Pacific Railroad (24SA348). The Northern Pacific Railroad, including the masonry arch bridge over Weeksville Creek is located south of the existing roadway. The proposed project will include alignment shifts to avoid impacts to the railroad.

Munson Dump (24SA345) (MP 62.3).

There would be **No Effect** to the Munson Dump (24SA345). The proposed alignment will shift to the north away from this site. Proposed toe of fill catch limits are 12 m (40 ft) from the delineated site.

Trudgen Place (24SA346) (MP 68.0).

There would be **No Adverse Effect** to the barn at the Trudgen Place (24SA346). The Trudgen Place is located outside of existing railroad R/W and north of the existing roadway. No new highway R/W will be required from the site and no excavation will be required due to roadway construction activities.

Diehl Barn (24SA347) (MP 68.6).

There would be **No Adverse Effect** to the Diehl Barn (24SA347). The Diehl Barn is located north of and adjacent to the proposed alignment. Fill slopes will be steepened with guardrail to avoid impacts to the site. The special provisions will provide for due care to avoid damage to the structure during construction activities.

Weeksville/Sears Site (24SA155) (MP 68.6).

There would be **No Adverse Effect** to the Weeksville/Sears Site (24SA155). Complete avoidance of this site is not possible since the site lies both north and south of the alignment. Mitigation measures include steepening of fill slopes to the north and the project special provisions will require an on-site MDT archaeologist during construction activities in the vicinity of the site.

Bad Rock Trail (24SA343) (MP 64.6).

There would be **No Adverse Effect** to the Bad Rock Trail (24SA343). Complete avoidance of this site is not possible due to the shifting of the alignment to the north away from the railroad with the MSE wall, and excavation of rock to provide a rock catchment area for safety from falling rock. Mitigation measures include erecting interpretive signage at the nearby turnout.

A concurrence on the Determination of Effect (DOE) was received from the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on January 7, 1998. SHPO concurred with the DOE determined by MDT for each site. A copy of the DOE can be found in **Appendix C** of this document.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would have no impact on the historical or cultural resources.

4.8 Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Resources

Section 4(f) land includes publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife or waterfowl refuges or land from a significant historic site. Historic resources (sites, bridges, railways and archaeological sites) are also considered Section 4(f) resources if they are on, or are eligible for the NRHP. Federal statutes and regulations (23 U.S.C. Section 138, C.F.R. Section 771) prohibit the use of Section 4(f) lands for transportation purposes unless a determination is made that:

- There is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land, and
- The proposed action includes all reasonable measures to reduce the harm to the affected resource.

Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Act (LWCA) of 1965 regulates the use of Section 4(f) lands that were acquired or developed through the application of LWCA grants. Section 6(f) prohibits the conversion of such lands to non-recreational purposes without concurrence of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service and replacement of affected lands.

Existing Environment

There are four (4) Section 4(f) properties identified within the limits of the project. No Section 6(f) sites were identified within the limits of the project.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

The proposed project will affect four (4) of the Section 4(f) sites identified within the project limits. It was determined by MDT and SHPO that there would be **No Adverse Effects** to the four sites consisting of the following:

Trudgen Place (24SA346)
Diehl Barn (24SA347)
Weeksville/Sears Site (24SA155)
Bad Rock Trail (24SA343)

A Section 4(f) Programmatic Evaluation was prepared for each site and included in **Appendix D** of this document.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would have no impacts to any Section 4(f) or 6(f) properties.

4.9 Wetlands

Existing Environment

An updated Wetlands Evaluation was prepared on June 21, 2000 for this project and a Montana Wetland Field Evaluation Form was completed for each site.

There are four (4) wetland sites identified in the project corridor. One (1) wetland site (Site 1a and 1b) is located in the highway ditch adjacent to the present roadway at MP 64.8. Wetland Site 2 consists of three separate wetlands (2a, 2b, and 2c) which consist of an old meander of the Clark Fork River located on both sides of the alignment between MP 65.4 and MP 65.6. Wetland Site 3 also consists of an old meander of the Clark Fork River lying north of the highway between MP 68.1 and MP 68.3. Wetland Site 4 consists of the fringe along the banks of Weeksville Creek located north of the roadway at MP 68.5. No riparian wetlands were identified in the project corridor.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

The proposed project will affect approximately 0.223 hectares (0.55 acres) of wetlands adjacent to the highway. The affected wetlands primarily function as small mammal and song bird habitat as well as waterfowl habitat in the two Clark Fork River meanders.

Since all wetland sites are located adjacent to the existing highway, the complete avoidance of the wetland sites would not be possible. Elimination of the wetland site (site 1a and 1b) at MP 64.8 is unavoidable due to the proximity of the site to the highway. However, the site contains no open water and contains a total area of 0.012 hectares (0.03 acres).

Impacts to the two old Clark Fork River meanders (Site 2 and Site 3) will be minimized by using steep fill slopes with guardrail to reduce toe of fill catch limits. Temporary erosion control measures will be used to stabilize soils until permanent vegetation is established.

The following is a summary of wetland sites:

Wetland Site	MP	Location to Highway	TOTAL WETLANDS			PERMANENT			Wetland Class
			SQ.M.	hectare	acre	SQ.M.	hectare	acre	
1a	64.8	North	132.575	0.012	0.03	132.575	0.012	0.03	III
1b	64.8	South	139.929	0.012	0.03	139.929	0.012	0.03	III
2a	65.5	North	5673.018	0.567	1.40	345.856	0.036	0.09	III
2b	65.4	South of RR	2766.997	0.275	0.68	0.000	0.000	0.00	III
2c	65.6	South	121.459	0.012	0.03	121.459	0.012	0.03	III
3	68.2	North	6824.702	0.684	1.69	1241.377	0.125	0.31	III
4	68.5	North	347.138	0.036	0.09	243.991	0.024	0.06	II/III
		TOTAL	16005.818	1.603	3.96	2225.187	0.223	0.55	

Unavoidable wetland impacts will be mitigated following the procedures outlined in the 1996 Montana Interagency Wetlands Group Memorandum of Understanding "Interagency Operating Procedure for the conservation of wetland resources associated with transportation construction projects in the state of Montana." This Memorandum of Understanding is available at the Montana Department of Transportation Environmental Services.

On site mitigation opportunities for the impacts to the 0.223 hectares (0.55 acres) of wetlands were investigated and determined to be infeasible. MDT will pursue appropriate mitigation for the unavoidable impacts associated with this proposed project in a timely and efficient manner. At this time, appropriate and proximate mitigation opportunities have not been identified. MDT is currently involved in identifying and pursuing mitigation opportunities within the vicinity of Highway 200 and the northwest region of the state.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would not impact any wetlands.

4.10 Visual Impacts

Existing Environment

The Highway 200 corridor is a scenic area that contains unique visual resources which includes the Clark Fork River and scenic mountain ranges with several areas of pronounced, vertical rock cliffs. Wildlife is prevalent throughout the corridor, with several species such as bighorn sheep, deer and elk often visible from the roadway.

The view shed of the existing highway is generally limited to the immediate corridor including residents and tourists commuting on MT 200 as well as floaters on the adjacent Clark Fork River.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

The impacts of tree clearing are primarily visual. Trees will be cleared to the construction limits or to the clear zone as determined by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Roadside Design Guide.

Some visual impacts to the 'Bad Rock' area and several rock cliffs located throughout the project are anticipated. Expected heavy rock excavation will leave fresh cut rock faces, which will differ in color from the present rock cliffs. In addition, the MSE wall in the 'Bad Rock' area will be visible to floaters on the Clark Fork River.

Mitigation measures to reduce adverse visual impacts to the corridor include clearing of trees to the clear zone only and retaining of all trees located behind guardrail.

Additionally, the elevated roadway section is anticipated to enhance the views of the traveling public and provide a safer route with adequate turnouts, ultimately allowing increased viewing opportunities of the adjacent landscape.

Design of the rock fall slopes and catchment areas will maximize safety of the traveling public, assist in reducing vehicle related wildlife fatalities due to increased sight distance, as well as minimize maintenance from rock fall.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Under the no-build alternative, trees would not be removed and the aesthetics adjacent to the roadway would not be impacted.

4.11 Fish, Wildlife, and Threatened or Endangered Species

Existing Environment

The identification of Threatened and Endangered (T/E) Species was conducted in accordance with Section 7(a) of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS).

Threatened and endangered and sensitive species which have the potential of being affected by the project include the bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus), gray wolf (Canis lupus), grizzly bear (Urus arctos horribilis), bull trout (Salvelinus confluentus), Canada lynx (Lynx canadensis) and the westslope cutthroat trout (Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi).

Bighorn sheep (Ovis canadensis), mule deer (Odocoileus hemionus), and elk (Wapiti) are the most common wildlife species found in the general project area.

Most of the nesting sites for bald eagles in Montana have been recorded and closely scrutinized to determine the status of the bird. A 1992 survey concluded that no known bald eagle nests exist within the immediate project corridor and a field survey of the area yielded no bald eagle sightings. However, recent contact with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFW&P) disclosed a relatively new bald eagle nest site reported in 1997 at MP 64 located more than 0.97 km (0.6 mi) south of the proposed project and Clark Fork River. Although the project has potential as peregrine falcon nesting habitat due to rock cliffs and talus slopes, no known nesting sites exist within the project corridor.

The occurrence of animal collisions is quite frequent especially involving bighorn sheep. Bighorn sheep mortality from vehicles and trains was generally slow in number until 1988 as documented by MFW&P.[1] From December of 1987 through May of 1992 there were total of 108 bighorn sheep killed from vehicle and train collisions. During the same time period, the bighorn sheep population fluctuated around 300 animals as measured during spring survey flights completed by MFW&P. From September 1990 through April 1997, a total of 152 bighorn sheep were killed from train and vehicle collisions, with 34 of the 152 total due to train collisions. Three years prior to installation of the sheep warning signs during the period of September 1990 through April 1993, sixty sheep were killed, while during the period from September 1993 through April 1996 following installation of the sheep warning signs, a total of 39 sheep were killed.

Bighorn sheep fatalities are primarily concentrated in the vicinity of MP 63.6 to MP 65.6. Mortality rates continued to increase until 1993 when amber flashing warning signs were installed between MP 58 and MP 66 due to concern by MFW&P over the bighorn sheep fatalities. MFW&P studies show a direct correlation between increased sheep mortality and increased average daily traffic (ADT) prior to the installation of the amber warning signs.[2] Bighorn sheep mortality dropped steadily since the warning signs were installed even though an increase in ADT was observed during the same period. Vehicle collisions with deer are also frequent throughout the project corridor.

The proposed project is located adjacent to an area considered by MFW&P to be occupied grizzly bear habitat. There have been no confirmed sightings of grizzly bears and grizzly bears have not been mentioned by MFW&P as utilizing the project area. A field survey of the area yielded no grizzly bear sightings or detection of critical habitat for the grizzly bear. Any occupation of the highway corridor would likely be an occasional pass through of the area.

[1] MFW&P wildlife Biologist Bruce Sterling, January 13, 1993 Report

[2] Effectiveness of Highway Warning Signs in Preventing Vehicle Mortality to Bighorn Sheep, Bruce Sterling, MFW&P Biologist, January 31, 1997.

The proposed project is also located in the western portion of the state which has seen an increasing number of gray wolf sightings. No known sightings of the gray wolf have been documented in the vicinity of the project, nor have any signs of use of the area by the gray wolf have been observed. Any use of this area by the gray wolf would likely be temporary as the wolf was traveling from one location to another.

The project crosses Munson Creek near the beginning of the project and Weeksville Creek near the end of the project. Both stream crossings are perennial and were initially noted by MFW&P to have insignificant fisheries value. However, westslope cutthroat trout were recently identified by MFW&P as spawning in Weeksville Creek and Munson Creek. As a result, fish passage provisions will be incorporated into the box culvert designs at both stream crossings.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

MFW&P was contacted and were requested to provide information pertaining to wildlife and threatened and endangered species. Responses from MFW&P biologists were utilized to assess impacts. Design considerations such as steepening of fill slopes and guardrail will be implemented to lessen impacts to existing habitat.

The Biological Resources Report prepared for the project was completed on May 5, 1993 and updated on April 26, 1998. A Biological Assessment was prepared in October 2000 for the proposed project to include the Canada lynx. The reports concluded that the proposed roadway construction activities would have the following impacts on threatened and endangered species:

- "not likely to adversely affect" the threatened bald eagle and its critical habitat.
- "not likely to adversely affect" the grizzly bear and its critical habitat.
- "not likely to adversely affect" the gray wolf and its critical habitat.
- "not likely to adversely affect" the threatened Canada lynx.
- "not likely to jeopardize" the Westslope cutthroat trout.
- "may affect:likely to adversely affect" the threatened Bull trout.

Formal consultation has been initiated with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Mitigation measures will be incorporated into the proposed project as required as a result of the consultation.

Impacts to fisheries in the area will be short term construction related. To minimize potential impacts to migrating and spawning westslope cutthroat trout in Munson Creek and Weeksville Creek, no instream work will be allowed between April 1 and May 31.

Mitigation measures will be implemented in the design to reduce vehicle collisions with bighorn sheep and deer. Possible mitigation includes adjusting the seed mix to a hard fescue which is not preferable to sheep and deer. Additionally, a post construction review of animal/vehicle related problem areas could be completed with management and treatment decisions coordinated with MFW&P. Sight distance will also be increased with the new highway design, providing motorists with advanced warning of animals crossing the roadway.

In addition, the proposed barrier wall to be constructed in the "Bad Rock" area to prevent rock fall from encroaching on the roadway will also provide a vertical barrier to prevent sheep from crossing the roadway and adjacent railroad to the south and ultimately the Clark Fork River.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would have no impact on threatened and endangered species. Although sheep are not a threatened and endangered species, it is possible that more sheep/vehicle related fatalities could occur under this alternative than the preferred alternative with an increase in ADT.

4.12 Rare Plants

Existing Environment

Currently, the water howellia (Howellia aquatilis), ute ladies'- tresses (Spiranthes diluvialis), and spalding's champion or catchfly (Silene spaldingii) are the only plant species in Montana listed as threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

No rare or sensitive plant species have been documented or observed in the highway corridor.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative would not impact rare or sensitive plants.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would not impact rare or sensitive plants.

4.13 Erosion Control and Seeding

Existing Environment

The highway corridor consists of a variety of ground cover from farmland adjacent to the existing roadway to mountainous terrain with rock outcroppings and coniferous trees.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

An Erosion Control Plan will be prepared for this proposed project and submitted to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's Permitting and Compliance Division in compliance with their Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Regulations (ARM 16.20.1314) for this proposed project. Best Management Practices will be included in the design of this plan using guidelines as established in MDT's Highway Construction Standard Erosion Control Workplan. The objective is to minimize erosion of disturbed areas during and following construction of this proposed project.

In accordance with **7-22-2152**, and **60-2-208 M.C.A.**, MDT will re-establish a permanent desirable vegetation community along all areas disturbed by the proposed construction. A set of revegetation guidelines will be developed by MDT that must be followed by the contractor. These specifications will include instructions on seeding methods, seeding dates, types and amounts of mulch and fertilizer, along with seed mix components. Seed mixes include a variety of species to assure that areas disturbed by construction are immediately stabilized by vegetative cover. The Seeding Special Provisions developed for this proposed project will be forwarded to the Sanders County Weed Board for approval.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would have no impacts on erosion and seeding.

4.14 Noise

Existing Environment

A traffic noise assessment report has been completed in October 2001 for this project. The residence south of the roadway at MP 63.4 is the closest sensitive receiver to the centerline on this project. The existing highway centerline is approximately 24 m (80 ft) from the residence. Peak hour noise levels are currently in the range of 65 decibels (dBA).

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

With the preferred alternative, the centerline will be shifted approximately 12 m (40 ft) away from the residence at MP 63.4. A residence at the Lawyer Nursery Operation north of the roadway at MP 66.3 will be 3 m (10 ft) closer to the new centerline due to shifting of the alignment to minimize impacts to nursery stock south of the roadway.

Traffic noise levels calculated for the Present Year 2001 and the Design Year 2020 using existing and projected traffic volumes indicate that Design Year noise levels will not increase substantially (2-6 dBA) over existing levels, nor will Design Year noise levels exceed the Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) (23 CFR Part 772) of 66 dBA for Activity Category B (schools, residences, churches, public meeting facilities) at potentially sensitive receivers. Therefore, no traffic noise impacts are predicted for the preferred alternative.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

Impacts of the no-build alternative include two of 13 receptors (residences) reaching or exceeding the NAC criteria of 66 dBA with Design Year traffic volumes. Traffic noise abatement measures would need to be evaluated for the impacted receptors during a future MT 200 project under this alternative.

4.15 Construction

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

Utility relocation will be required throughout the project with extensive utility relocation required near Munson Creek at the beginning of the project and numerous locations throughout the highway corridor. Buried telephone lines and power lines will be moved or reset. No major issues are anticipated with the utility relocations.

Since the new roadway will essentially follow the existing alignment, it will be necessary to maintain traffic on the highway during the construction period. There will be some temporary impacts during construction, however, this will be short lived and last only as long as it takes to complete the necessary work. A traffic control plan will be developed to minimize inconvenience to motorists during construction.

Detours will be required for construction of the MSE wall and the Weeksville Creek crossing to facilitate construction. Impacts from the MSE wall detour between MP 64.3 and MP 64.8 include one way only traffic, stopping of traffic for up to ½ hour due to movement of MRL trains adjacent to the detour, and rerouting of wide loads. Bicycle traffic would also likely be eliminated due to the narrow width of the one way detour. The anticipated length of time the MSE wall detour would be required is four (4) months.

The Weeksville Creek detour will be a two lane two way detour. No time delays or impacts to emergency vehicle or bicycles is anticipated. The anticipated length of time the detour would be required is one (1) month.

As a result of construction activities, temporary increases in noise levels as well as air pollution from dust and fumes is anticipated. However, increased noise and air pollution will be temporary, ending with the construction activities. The contractor will be required to adhere to all federal, state and local regulations to minimize construction related pollution. Air quality permits will be obtained from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Air and Waste Management Bureau for asphalt plants and crushers. Dust will be controlled by watering or other acceptable methods.

Water quality effects associated with the stream crossings/wetland areas will generally be short-term construction related.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would have no impacts from construction activities.

4.16 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments to Resources

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

No resources other than money, labor and road building materials will be irretrievably committed to this project. The land that will be required for R/W will not be available for other uses unless a demand greater than the roadway requires a land use change.

There does not appear to be any major irreversible commitment of resources that would significantly affect the environment in the area of the project. Therefore, the use of money, labor and materials is considered to be justified as it will provide a much needed improved highway facility to serve the traveling public.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would have no impact on resources.

4.17 Hazardous Waste Potential

Existing Environment

The potential for hazardous waste sites being exposed along the project was reviewed. Potential abandoned underground fuel storage tanks have been identified at a former service station located at MP 63.4 south of the roadway. However, further investigation and contact with the owner revealed that the building was not a former service station and no underground fuel storage tanks exist on the site. In the event underground fuel storage tanks are identified on the project, criteria suggested by the AASHTO Task Force on Hazardous Wastes in their "Hazardous Waste Guideline for Project Development" will be followed. There are no Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) superfund sites in the project corridor.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

A hazardous waste assessment was prepared for the project by MDT on November 24, 1992. In addition to the mentioned possible underground fuel tanks at MP 63.4, two registered 3785 l (1000 gal) tanks are located at the Lawyer Nursery at MP 66.2. However, the tanks are located approximately 90 m (300 ft) from the present roadway and will not be impacted by the project. No other possible hazardous waste sites were identified. In addition, there will be no cuts in the vicinity of the railroad, only fills.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would have no impacts on hazardous wastes.

4.18 Environmental Justice and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act

On February 11, 1994, President Clinton issued an Executive Order (#12898), in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, directing all federal department and agency heads to take appropriate and necessary steps to ensure that all programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance that affect human health or the environment do not directly, or through contractual or other arrangements, use criteria, methods, or practices that discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

No concentration of minorities, and/or low-income groups have been identified in the vicinity of the proposed preferred alternative.

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Population and Low-Income Populations has been observed for this proposed project.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

Implementation of the preferred alternative will not create disproportionately high and/or adverse effects on the health or environment of minority and/or low-income populations. This proposed project is also in compliance with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (42 U.S.C. 2000) under the FHWA's regulations (23 CFR 200).

In the long term, the reconstruction alternative is expected to have a beneficial economic impact throughout the valley. The proposed construction will not have any adverse impacts on existing public services, facilities, minority groups or residences. No homes or businesses are anticipated to be relocated as a result of the project.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

No impacts to human health, the environment, or minority groups is anticipated.

4.19 Cumulative and Secondary Impacts

Existing Environment

MDT currently has one active project in this part of the district not including the proposed project. Proposed project STPP 6-1(87)56, Control No. 4039, Thompson River East starts at MP 56 on MT 200 and continues southeasterly to MP 59.1 This project includes reconstruction and roadway widening, plant mix surfacing, and structures. The project has a ready date of July 2004, compared to the ready date of August 2002 for STPP 6-1(56)62, Control No. 2014, Weeksville-West.

The Sanders County Planning Department was contacted in November 2001 to determine if there were any additional or proposed projects in the proposed project vicinity such as subdivisions, etc. which may have a cumulative and secondary impact. No known or proposed projects are in the vicinity of the proposed project which might result in a cumulative or secondary impact.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

No cumulative environmental impacts are anticipated from this project due to the difference in times of construction activities. Therefore, no MDT project will have any significant cumulative environmental impacts on this proposed action. This proposed reconstruction project will also have no significant cumulative environmental impacts on other MDT projects within the Missoula District due to the remote distance of greater than 1 kilometer (0.6 miles) from the proposed project. Proposed actions from cooperating agencies (USDA Forest Service, Lolo National Forest) that have an impact on this proposed project include purchase of property for a trailhead located west of Munson Creek at MP 62.3. A new approach will be located on the north side of the proposed project with adequate grades for access to the proposed trailhead which will improve safety and access for the forest users. A minor increase in forest use may result from the improved access due to increased visibility and awareness of the new trailhead.

Additionally, the Lolo National Forest requested that existing turnouts north of the highway be perpetuated for sheep viewing, and hunter and public access at MP 64.0, MP 64.2 and MP 64.9. Turnouts will be perpetuated as part of this proposed project improving viewing opportunities and roadway safety.

Cumulative and Secondary impacts from improvements as a result of the proposed project are difficult to analyze. To date, there are no accurate predictive models to determine whether improving an existing two lane road will result in more development and an increase in traffic.

It is not anticipated that secondary and cumulative impacts will result from the proposed roadway improvements. In western Montana, population growth is occurring in areas with inadequate roads in the Bitterroot Valley, Flathead Lake and Whitefish areas. A conclusion can be made that population and traffic growth is related to factors other than improved roadways, such as scenic and aesthetic values and employment opportunity.

An additional concern is an increase in heavy truck traffic due to rerouting of trucks on an improved roadway. Montana Highway 200 is a direct route for truck traffic traveling east-west and north-south through the Missoula, Flathead, Libby-Thompson Falls, and St. Regis areas. The proposed project is not anticipated to substantially alter existing patterns or routes for truck traffic since MT 200 is essentially a direct route with little opportunity to bypass the route with alternate routes. Trucks are currently using MT 200 due to the more direct route and associated distance and time savings. Truck traffic is anticipated to increase correspondingly with an increase in ADT, even without roadway improvements. Minor increases in truck traffic may result from the proposed project due to improved operation and safety during inclement weather. The increase in truck traffic as a result of the proposed project is anticipated to be minor.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would not result in cumulative or secondary impacts.

4.20 Transportation Impacts

Existing Environment

The existing roadway does not meet current design standards for horizontal and vertical alignment and roadway width for current and projected traffic volumes for a 100 km/h (60 mph) design speed.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

The proposed roadway will meet current standards for horizontal and vertical alignment, roadway width, sight distance, and cut and fill slopes. The roadway improvements will provide a safer route for the traveling public. In addition, scenic turnouts provided will allow for a safer exit and entrance to the roadway which will increase the availability of animal viewing and viewing of the overall scenery in the highway corridor.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative will leave the roadway in its present condition with only routine maintenance of the facility. As the traffic volumes increase, safety of the traveling public will correspondingly decrease.

4.21 Pedestrians and Bicyclists

Existing Environment

Existing pedestrian and bicycle traffic on MT 200 in the vicinity of the proposed project is considered moderate to high, particularly in the summer tourist season. Although the route is not internationally advertised, it is a popular route for Western Montana and an alternate bicycle route to the heavily traveled U.S. 93. Existing shoulder widths are 0.6m (2ft) and narrower in areas with guardrail and areas adjacent to rock cliffs.

Impacts of Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative will significantly improve the existing highway by improving sight and stopping distance, providing a wider facility for non-vehicle transportation, correcting horizontal and vertical curves to current design standards, ultimately providing a safer facility for the bicyclists and pedestrians. However, rumble strips may partially affect the advantage of the wider shoulder. To facilitate bicycle travel, rumble strips will be installed in an alternating pattern with a 183 m (60 ft) strip with a 3.6 m (12 ft) gap and rumble strips will be eliminated in guardrail areas.

Impacts of No-Build Alternative

The no-build alternative would leave the roadway in its present condition, resulting in no immediate impacts. However, as the traffic volumes increase, safety of the pedestrian and bicyclists on the roadway is expected to decrease, resulting in increased vehicle and pedestrian bicycle accidents.

4.22 Permits Required

The following permits will be acquired prior to any relevant disturbance.

This proposed project will be in compliance with the provisions for both Water Quality under **75-5/401(2) M.C.A.** for Section 3(a)authorizations, and Stream Protection under **87-5-501** through **509 M.C.A.**, inclusive.

- A 124SPA Stream Protection Permit will be required by Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.

The proposed project will require the following permits under the Clean Water Act **(33 U.S.C. 1251-1376)**:

- A Section 402/Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit from Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality's Water Quality Division; and,
- A Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army – Corp of Engineers. The COE will determine if this proposed project qualifies for a "Nationwide" 404 permit under the provisions of **33 CFR 330**.

The proposed project will require the following permit under Executive Order no. 11988 and Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) floodplain regulations (23 CFR 650, Subpart A).

- Floodplain Development Permit

All work will also be in accordance with the Water Quality Act of 1987 (**P.L. 100-04**), as amended.

5. COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

5.1 Summary

Coordination efforts were initiated by the MDT on October 19, 1992 when a letter of intent was issued to federal, state, and local agencies and affected private individuals and organizations. Comments and information were requested which would be relevant to this project.

A public informational meeting was held on December 2, 1992 in the County Courthouse in Thompson Falls, MT. Seven people were in attendance. None of the persons in attendance were in opposition to the project. The public comment ranged from concern for safety of the area residents and traveling public, impacts to the historic 'Bad Rock' trail, sheep fatality in the 'Bad Rock' area, aesthetics of the area altered due to highway construction, sheep viewing turnouts, site distance for safety of the approach roads to the roadway from the Panorama Estates, and effects on the bald eagle due to construction activities. In addition, property acquisition under negotiation was mentioned in the Munson Creek area by the United States Forest Service (USFS) for a trailhead and the acquisition of land at MP 66 for bighorn sheep habitat. A summary of the transcript is on file at the Montana Department of Transportation in Helena (46 pages).

A second public informational meeting was held at the Senior Citizens Center in Thompson Falls on November 9, 1999. The informational meeting was an "open house" format with one on one discussions with landowners and interested parties. A formal presentation was not held. A couple of landowners expressed concern about the project and impacts to their property and businesses. Two written comments were submitted following the meeting opposing elements of the project. Those comments were evaluated and considered during subsequent project development. Several property owners were in favor of the project and were curious how they would be impacted.

Contact will be maintained with local individuals, and businesses, and community groups throughout the remainder of the environmental and design process.

There is considerable correspondence on file with the Montana Department of Transportation documenting coordination with other federal, state, and local officials. This correspondence is available for review at the Helena office. Continued coordination is being pursued with all applicable public agencies.

In accordance with state and federal regulations for public involvement (**ARM 18.2.240** and **23 CRF 771.111**, respectively), this Environmental Assessment (EA) will be made available for review by the public and responsible agencies. Also, a public hearing for the project may be held during the EA public review period, if requested. All written and verbal comments received at the public hearing, and all written comments received during the EA comment period will be reviewed. Responses will be prepared for all substantive comments received. If appropriate, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be prepared. If significant impacts are found as a result of the project, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared.

5.2 List of Preparers

This document was prepared with the help of the following individuals:

Stephen Prinzing, P.E., Neil Consultants, Inc., Project Engineer
Bruce Sterling, MFW&P, Biologist
Patrick Saffel, MFW&P, Fisheries Biologist
Jon Axline, Historian, MDT
Connie Moore & Dale Gray, GCM Services
Deborah Wambach, MDT Biologist
Dennis Flath, Non-game Biologist, MFW&P
Joel Marshik, P.E., MDT Environmental Services
Susan Kilcrease, MDT Environmental Services

5.3 List of Government Agencies with Jurisdiction and/or Permits Required

US Army Corps of Engineers (Federal Clean Water Act–404 Permit)
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (Montana Stream Protection Act–124 Permit)
Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation (Floodplain Development Permit)
Montana Department of Environmental Quality (Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit – Section 402)
Lolo National Forest

5.4 List of Other Agencies or Groups Contacted or Have Contributed Information

Montana Rail Link Railroad

5.5 Coordination with Others

In accordance with state and federal regulations for early coordination, public involvement, and project development (23 CFR 771.111d), one agency has been identified as a cooperating agency:

- USDA Forest Service – Lolo National Forest

The Lolo National Forest has been contacted for coordination as a cooperating agency. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was completed on January 27, 1993 between the FHWA, the MDT, and the USDA Forest Services' Northern Region concerning the proposed project. A follow up letter regarding Section 4(f) lands and the acquisition of new or additional easements on National Forest lands was prepared on August 8, 1997. See **Appendix A** for copies of the correspondence.

Lolo National Forest land is adjacent to the project for approximately 3 km (1.9 mi) and R/W will be acquired. Additionally, a trailhead access to the Munson Creek drainage at MP 62.3 has been coordinated and will be incorporated into the proposed project.

6. APPENDICES

6.1 Appendix A - Section 4(f) Programmatic Evaluation

6.2 Appendix B - Farmland Conversion Impact Rating (Form AD-1006)

6.3 Appendix C - SHPO Concurrence Letter/DOE

6.4 Appendix D - Agency Comments

APPENDIX A

SECTION 4(f) PROGRAMMATIC EVALUATION

MONTANA DIVISION

"NATIONWIDE" *SECTION 4(f)* EVALUATION FOR MINOR IMPACTS
ON
HISTORIC SITES
EXCLUDING HISTORIC BRIDGE REPLACEMENTS

BAD ROCK TRAIL (24SA343)

The Bad Rock Trail (24SA343) consists of a prehistoric foot trail segment over Bad Rock.

Project #STPP 6-1(56)62, (P.M.S. #**2014**)
Date: 12/03/01
Project Name: Weeksville - West
Location: Sanders County

NOTE: Any response in a box requires additional information. Consult the "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation criteria.

	YES	NO
1. Is the *4(f)* site adjacent to the existing highway?	X	☐
2. Does the proposed project require the removal or alteration of historic structures, and/or objects?	☐	X
3. Does the proposed project disturb or remove archaeological resources which are important to preserve in-place rather than to recover?	☐	X
4. Is the impact on the *4(f)* site considered minor (i.e.: no effect; or no adverse effect)?	X	☐
5. Has the STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO) agreed in writing with the assessment of impacts, and the proposed mitigation?	X	☐
6. Is the proposed action under an Environmental Impact Statement (E.I.S.)?	☐	X
7. Is the proposed project on a new location?	☐	X
8. The Scope-of-Work for the proposed project is one of the following:	X	☐

a) Improved traffic operation;
b) Safety improvements;
c) 3R;
d) Bridge replacement on essentially the same alignment; or
e) Addition of lanes.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

1. The "do-nothing" **ALTERNATIVE** has been evaluated, and is not considered to be feasible and prudent. X ☐

NOTE: *Any response in a box requires additional information. Consult the "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation criteria.*

YES **NO**

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED (conclusion:)

2. An **ALTERNATIVE** has been evaluated on the existing alignment which improves the highway without any *4(f)* impacts, and is also not considered to be feasible and prudent. X ☐

3. An **ALTERNATIVE** on a new location avoiding the *4(f)* site has been evaluated, and is not considered to be feasible and prudent. X ☐

Descriptions of **ALTERNATIVES 2.** and **3.** are *below.* X ☐

Alternative 2

Alternate alignments to the north of the existing corridor and south of the Clark Fork River were considered. The alternate alignments were not considered feasible nor prudent due to constructibility problems and high construction costs associated with the rugged terrain and river crossings, and the significant amount of right-of-way required for an alternate alignment through national forest land. (See also Paragraph 3, Alternatives Considered, Page 5 *of the Environmental Assessment*)

Alternative 3

An alternate was considered to shift the alignment away from the 4(f) site but was not possible due to the MRL railroad immediately adjacent to and south of the alignment.

MINIMIZATION OF HARM

1. The proposed project includes all possible planning to minimize harm. X ☐
2. Measures to minimize harm include the following:

Shifting of the alignment in this area is not possible due to the MSE wall construction and excavation of rock for a rock catchment area to meet design and safety standards and the proximity of the roadway to the MRL tracks to the south. Mitigation measures to reduce harm to the site include erecting interpretive signage at the nearby turnout.

COORDINATION

1. The proposed project has been **COORDINATED** with the following:

a) SHPO (date: 1/07/98) X ☐
b) ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION (1/13/98) X ☐
c) Property owner (N/A) _ ☐
d) Local/State/Federal agencies X ☐

List:

MFW&P (date: 1992-2000)
USDA - Forest Service, Lolo National Forest (date: 1992-2000)

2. Two of the preceding had the following comment(s) regarding this proposed project, and/or the mitigation:

MFW&P
Bruce Sterling, Wild Game Biologist

1. Mr. Sterling recommended that the flashing amber sheep crossing signs installed in 1993 be perpetuated to maintain manageable levels of sheep mortality from vehicles.

Patrick Saffel, Fisheries Biologist

1. Mr. Saffel recommended that baffles be installed in the double box culvert at Weeksville Creek and single box culvert at Munson Creek to facilitate fish passage.

USDA Forest Service, Lolo National Forest

The following letters are included by reference (see Appendix A):

- Letter dated 11/12/92
- Letter dated 12/24/92
- Letter dated 10/20/97

SUMMARY

All required **ALTERNATIVES** have been evaluated and the proposed project meets all the criteria included in the "Nationwide Programmatic" *Section 4(f)* evaluation approved on December 23, 1986. This Programmatic Evaluation includes all possible planning to minimize harm which will be incorporated in this proposed project.

MONTANA DIVISION

"NATIONWIDE" *SECTION 4(f)* EVALUATION FOR MINOR IMPACTS
ON
HISTORIC SITES
EXCLUDING HISTORIC BRIDGE REPLACEMENTS

WEEKSVILLE/SEARS SITE (24SA155)

The Weeksville/Sears site (24SA155) is located near the junction of the Weeksville Creek road with Highway 200. The site may contain the remains of the railroad town of Weeksville which was founded in 1882 as a result of construction activity on the Northern Pacific Railroad.

Project #STPP 6-1(56)62, (P.M.S. #**2014**) Date: 12/03/01

Project Name: Weeksville - West Location: Sanders County

NOTE: ***Any response in a box requires additional information. Consult the "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation criteria.***

		YES	**NO**
1.	Is the *4(f)* site adjacent to the existing highway?	X	☐
2.	Does the proposed project require the removal or alteration of historic structures, and/or objects?	☐	X
3.	Does the proposed project disturb or remove archaeological resources which are important to preserve in-place rather than to recover?	☐	X
4.	Is the impact on the *4(f)* site considered minor (i.e.: no effect; or no adverse effect)?	X	☐
5.	Has the STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO) agreed in writing with the assessment of impacts, and the proposed mitigation?	X	☐
6.	Is the proposed action under an Environmental Impact Statement (E.I.S.)?	☐	X
7.	Is the proposed project on a new location?	☐	X
8.	The Scope-of-Work for the proposed project is one of the following:	X	☐

a) Improved traffic operation;
b) Safety improvements;
c) 3R;
d) Bridge replacement on essentially the same alignment; or
e) Addition of lanes.

1. The "do-nothing" **ALTERNATIVE** has been evaluated, and is not considered to be feasible and prudent. X ☐

NOTE: *Any response in a box requires additional information. Consult the "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation criteria.*

YES **NO**

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED (conclusion:)

2. An **ALTERNATIVE** has been evaluated on the existing alignment which improves the highway without any *4(f)* impacts, and is also not considered to be feasible and prudent. X ☐

3. An **ALTERNATIVE** on a new location avoiding the *4(f)* site has been evaluated, and is not considered to be feasible and prudent. X ☐

Descriptions of **ALTERNATIVES 2**. and **3**. are *below*. X ☐

Alternative 2

Alternate alignments to the north of the existing corridor and south of the Clark Fork River were considered. The alternate alignments were not considered feasible nor prudent due to constructibility problems and high construction costs associated with the rugged terrain and river crossings, and the significant amount of right-of-way required for an alternate alignment through national forest land. (See also Paragraph 3, Alternatives Considered, Page 5)

Alternative 3

Alternative locations were evaluated within the corridor including shifting of the alignment, but would not eliminate impacts to the site due to the Diehl Barn Site (24SA347) located on the opposite side (north) of the roadway. Additionally, the site is also located north of the existing alignment with the majority of the site south of the existing alignment. Shifting of the alignment would not reduce impacts to the site.

MINIMIZATION OF HARM

1. The proposed project includes all possible planning to minimize harm. X ☐
2. Measures to minimize harm include the following:

The proposed horizontal alignment is coincidental with the existing alignment. Complete avoidance of the site is not possible due to safety design standards for cut and fill slopes and the alignment is located between two eligible NRHP sites. Reducing impacts to one NRHP site would increase impacts to the adjacent NRHP site. Mitigation measures to reduce harm to the site include *steepening* of fill slopes with guardrail and requiring an on site archaeologist during construction in this area to monitor the site.

COORDINATION

1. The proposed project has been **COORDINATED** with the following:

a) SHPO (date: 1/07/98) X ☐

b) ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION (1/13/98) X ☐

c) Property owner (N/A) (date: N/A) * _ ☐

d) Local/State/Federal agencies X ☐

** Coordination with the property owner was not completed for the site due to the subsurface nature of the cultural material and the site is located primarily on MRL Railroad right-of-way.*

List:

MFW&P (date: 1992-2000)

USDA - Forest Service, Lolo National Forest (date: 1992-1998)

2. Two of the preceding had the following comment(s) regarding this proposed project, and/or the mitigation:

MFW&P

Bruce Sterling, Wild Game Biologist

1. Mr. Sterling recommended that the flashing amber sheep crossing signs installed in 1993 be perpetuated to maintain manageable levels of sheep mortality from vehicles.

Patrick Saffel, Fisheries Biologist

1. Mr. Saffel recommended that baffles be installed in the double box culvert at Weeksville Creek to facilitate fish passage.

USDA Forest Service, Lolo National Forest

The following letters are included by reference (see Appendix A):

- Letter dated 11/12/92
- Letter dated 12/24/92
- Letter dated 10/20/97

SUMMARY

All required **ALTERNATIVES** have been evaluated and the proposed project meets all the criteria included in the "Nationwide Programmatic" *Section 4(f)* evaluation approved on December 23, 1986. This Programmatic Evaluation includes all possible planning to minimize harm which will be incorporated in this proposed project.

MONTANA DIVISION

"NATIONWIDE" *SECTION 4(f)* EVALUATION FOR MINOR IMPACTS
ON
HISTORIC SITES
EXCLUDING HISTORIC BRIDGE REPLACEMENTS

TRUDGEN PLACE (24SA346)

The Trudgen Place (24SA346) is situated between the town of Eddy and the former town site of Weeksville and consists of several buildings.

Project #STPP 6-1(56)62, (P.M.S. #**2014**) Date: 12/03/01

Project Name: Weeksville - West Location: Sanders County

NOTE: ***Any response in a box requires additional information. Consult the "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation criteria.***

		YES	**NO**
1.	Is the *4(f)* site adjacent to the existing highway?	X	☐
2.	Does the proposed project require the removal or alteration of historic structures, and/or objects?	☐	X
3.	Does the proposed project disturb or remove archaeological resources which are important to preserve in-place rather than to recover?	☐	X
4.	Is the impact on the *4(f)* site considered minor (i.e.: no effect; or no adverse effect)?	X	☐
5.	Has the STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO) agreed in writing with the assessment of impacts, and the proposed mitigation?	X	☐
6.	Is the proposed action under an Environmental Impact Statement (E.I.S.)?	☐	X
7.	Is the proposed project on a new location?	☐	X
8.	The Scope-of-Work for the proposed project is one of the following:	X	☐

a) Improved traffic operation;
b) Safety improvements;
c) 3R;
d) Bridge replacement on essentially the same alignment; or
e) Addition of lanes.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

		YES	NO
1.	The "do-nothing" **ALTERNATIVE** has been evaluated, and is not considered to be feasible and prudent.	X	☐

NOTE: *Any response in a box requires additional information. Consult the "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation criteria.*

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED (conclusion:)

	YES	NO
2. An **ALTERNATIVE** has been evaluated on the existing alignment which improves the highway without any *4(f)* impacts, and is also not considered to be feasible and prudent.	X	☐
3. An **ALTERNATIVE** on a new location avoiding the *4(f)* site has been evaluated, and is not considered to be feasible and prudent.	X	☐
Descriptions of **ALTERNATIVES 2.** and **3.** are *below*.	X	☐

Alternative 2

Alternate alignments to the north of the existing corridor and south of the Clark Fork River were considered. The alternate alignments were not considered feasible nor prudent due to constructibility problems and high construction costs associated with the rugged terrain and river crossings, and the significant amount of right-of-way required for an alternate alignment through national forest land. (See also Paragraph 3, Alternatives Considered, Page 5)

Alternative 3

Shifting of the alignment in the existing corridor away from the site was considered and implemented to reduce impacts to the site.

MINIMIZATION OF HARM

	YES	NO
1. The proposed project includes all possible planning to minimize harm.	X	☐

2. Measures to minimize harm include the following:

The proposed project alignment has been shifted away from the site and is located 36m (120 ft) from existing right-of-way. No new right-of-way will be acquired from the property.

COORDINATION

1. The proposed project has been **COORDINATED** with the following:

	YES	NO
a) SHPO (date: 1/07/98)	X	☐
b) ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION (1/13/98)	X	☐
c) Property owner (N/A) *		☐
d) Local/State/Federal agencies	X	☐

List:

MFW&P (date: 1992-2000)
USDA - Forest Service, Lolo National Forest (date: 1992-1998)

** Coordination was not completed with the property owner since new right-of-way limits are 10 m (33 ft) from the property line and no impacts to the site were anticipated.*

2. Two of the preceding had the following comment(s) regarding this proposed project, and/or the mitigation:

MFW&P
Bruce Sterling, Wild Game Biologist

1. Mr. Sterling recommended that the flashing amber sheep crossing signs installed in 1993 be perpetuated to maintain manageable levels of sheep mortality from vehicles.

Patrick Saffel, Fisheries Biologist

1. Mr. Saffel recommended that baffles be installed in the double box culvert at Weeksville Creek and single box culvert at Munson Creek to facilitate fish passage.

USDA Forest Service, Lolo National Forest

The following letters are included by reference (see Appendix A):

- Letter dated 11/12/92
- Letter dated 12/24/92
- Letter dated 10/20/97

SUMMARY

All required **ALTERNATIVES** have been evaluated and the proposed project meets all the criteria included in the "Nationwide Programmatic" *Section 4(f)* evaluation approved on December 23, 1986. This Programmatic Evaluation includes all possible planning to minimize harm which will be incorporated in this proposed project.

MONTANA DIVISION

"NATIONWIDE" *SECTION 4(f)* EVALUATION FOR MINOR IMPACTS ON HISTORIC SITES EXCLUDING HISTORIC BRIDGE REPLACEMENTS

DIEHL BARN (24SA347)

The Diehl Barn (34SA347) site is located at the former town site of Weeksville. The barn is associated with a 1910 farmstead.

Project #STPP 6-1(56)62, (P.M.S. #**2014**)

Date: 12/03/01

Project Name: Weeksville - West

Location: Sanders County

NOTE: ***Any response in a box requires additional information. Consult the "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation criteria.***

	YES	**NO**
1. Is the *4(f)* site adjacent to the existing highway?	X	☐
2. Does the proposed project require the removal or alteration of historic structures, and/or objects?	☐	X
3. Does the proposed project disturb or remove archaeological resources which are important to preserve in-place rather than to recover?	☐	X
4. Is the impact on the *4(f)* site considered minor (i.e.: no effect; or no adverse effect)?	X	☐
5. Has the STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO) agreed in writing with the assessment of impacts, and the proposed mitigation?	X	☐
6. Is the proposed action under an Environmental Impact Statement (E.I.S.)?	☐	X
7. Is the proposed project on a new location?	☐	X
8. The Scope-of-Work for the proposed project is one of the following:	X	☐

a) Improved traffic operation;
b) Safety improvements;
c) 3R;
d) Bridge replacement on essentially the same alignment; or
e) Addition of lanes.

NOTE: *Any response in a box requires additional information.*
Consult the "Nationwide" Section 4(f) Evaluation criteria.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED	**YES**	**NO**
1. The "do-nothing" **ALTERNATIVE** has been evaluated, and is not considered to be feasible and prudent.	X	☐
2. An **ALTERNATIVE** has been evaluated on the existing alignment which improves the highway without any *4(f)* impacts, and is also not considered to be feasible and prudent.	X	☐
3. An **ALTERNATIVE** on a new location avoiding the *4(f)* site has been evaluated, and is not considered to be feasible and prudent.	X	☐
Descriptions of **ALTERNATIVES 2.** and **3.** are *below*.	X	☐

Alternative 2

Alternate alignments to the north of the existing corridor and south of the Clark Fork River were considered. The alternate alignments were not considered feasible nor prudent due to constructibility problems and high construction costs associated with the rugged terrain and river crossings, and the significant amount of right-of-way required for an alternate alignment through national forest land. (See also Paragraph 3, Alternatives Considered, Page 5)

Alternative 3

Alternative locations in the corridor were evaluated including shifting of the alignment (south) away from the site but is not considered reasonable nor prudent since shifting the alignment further would increase impacts to the adjacent Weeksville-Sears Site (24SA155) which the majority of the site is located on the opposite side (south) of the roadway. Fill slopes will be steepened and guardrail added to avoid adverse impacts to the structure.

MINIMIZATION OF HARM

1. The proposed project includes all possible planning to minimize harm.	X	☐

2. Measures to minimize harm include the following:

Measures to minimize harm include steepening of fill slopes and use of guardrail to avoid impacts to the site. Toe of fill is located 4m (12 ft) from the barn. Verbiage will be added to the project special provisions to avoid damage due to construction activities. The barn will not be adversely impacted by the proposed project.

COORDINATION

1. The proposed project has been **COORDINATED** with the following:

a) SHPO (date: 1/07/98)	X	☐
b) ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION (1/13/98)	X	☐
c) Property owner Date: 1992	X	☐
d) Local/State/Federal agencies	X	☐

List:
MFW&P (date: 1992-2000)
USDA - Forest Service, Lolo National Forest (date: 1992-1998)

2. Two of the preceding had the following comment(s)
regarding this proposed project, and/or the mitigation:

MFW&P
Bruce Sterling, Wild Game Biologist
1. Mr. Sterling recommended that the flashing amber sheep crossing signs installed in 1993 be perpetuated to maintain manageable levels of sheep mortality from vehicles.

Patrick Saffel, Fisheries Biologist
1. Mr. Saffel recommended that baffles be installed in the double box culvert at Weeksville Creek to facilitate fish passage.

USDA Forest Service, Lolo National Forest

The following letters are included by reference (see Appendix A):

- Letter dated 11/12/92
- Letter dated 10/20/97
- Letter dated 12/24/92

The Forest Service will need to review specific proposals for acquisition land uses authorizations to cross National Forest lands in the project area in order to respond. In principle, it appears that any proposed needs can probably be accommodated with the consideration of possible mitigation measures.

SUMMARY

All required **ALTERNATIVES** have been evaluated and the proposed project meets all the criteria included in the "Nationwide Programmatic" *Section 4(f)* evaluation approved on December 23, 1986. This Programmatic Evaluation includes all possible planning to minimize harm which will be incorporated in this proposed project.

APPROVAL

This document is submitted pursuant to **49 U.S.C. 303** and in accordance with the provisions of **16 U.S.C. 470f.**

Joel M. Marshik, P.E.
Manager
Environmental Services

Date: 1/16/02

Approved:
Federal Highway Administration

Date: 1/16/02

JMM:KMH:SJP

APPENDIX B

FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING
(FORM AD-1006)

United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Plains Field Office
102 Highway 200 West
Plains, MT 59859

PHONE 826-3701
FAX 826-3273

November, 29, 2001

Steve Prinzing
C/O Neil Consultants, Inc.
4509, North Star Boulevard
Post Office Box 6350
Great Falls, MT 59406-6350

Dear Mr. Prinzing,

Enclosed is the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating that you requested from our office. The soil survey was completed between the last time you requested this information and now. I utilized the current data to complete the form so it reflects the best information we have. If you have any questions or need further information please don't hesitate to contact me here in Plains.

Sincerely,

Don J Feist

Don J. Feist
District Conservationist
Plains Field Office

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

U.S. Department of Agriculture

FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING

PART I *(To be completed by Federal Agency)*	Date Of Land Evaluation Request 11/29/01
Name Of Project Weeksville West ST PP 6-1 (56) 62	Federal Agency Involved USDOT Federal Highway Administration
Proposed Land Use Highway Reconstruction	County And State Sanders County, Montana
PART II *(To be completed by NRCS)*	Date Request Received By NRCS

Does the site contain prime, unique, statewide or local important farmland? *(If no, the FPPA does not apply -- do not complete additional parts of this form).*	Yes ☑	No ☐	Acres Irrigated 18,432	Average Farm Size 995

Major Crop(s) Hay, Grain, Pasture, Nursery	Farmable Land In Govt. Jurisdiction Acres: 87,412 % 23	Amount Of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: 62,437 % 16
Name Of Land Evaluation System Used Sanders County Soil Survey	Name Of Local Site Assessment System none	Date Land Evaluation Returned By NRCS 11/29/01

		Alternative Site Rating			
PART III *(To be completed by Federal Agency)*		Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly		8.8			
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly		0.0			
C. Total Acres In Site		8.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
PART IV *(To be completed by NRCS)* Land Evaluation Information					
A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland		8.8			
B. Total Acres Statewide And Local Important Farmland		0.0			
C. Percentage Of Farmland In County Or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted		0.0			
D. Percentage Of Farmland In Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value		0.6			
PART V *(To be completed by NRCS)* Land Evaluation Criterion Relative Value Of Farmland To Be Converted *(Scale of 0 to 100 Points)*		100	0	0	0
PART VI *(To be completed by Federal Agency)* Site Assessment Criteria *(These criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.5(b)*	Maximum Points				
1. Area In Nonurban Use	15	15			
2. Perimeter In Nonurban Use	10	10			
3. Percent Of Site Being Farmed	20	12			
4. Protection Provided By State And Local Government	20	0			
5. Distance From Urban Builtup Area	0				
6. Distance To Urban Support Services	0				
7. Size Of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average	10	0			
8. Creation Of Nonfarmable Farmland	25	4			
9. Availability Of Farm Support Services	5	0			
10. On-Farm Investments	20	6			
11. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services	25	0			
12. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use	10	0			
TOTAL SITE ASSESSMENT POINTS	160	47	0	0	0
PART VII *(To be completed by Federal Agency)*					
Relative Value Of Farmland *(From Part V)*	100	100	0	0	0
Total Site Assessment *(From Part VI above or a local site assessment)*	160	47	0	0	0
TOTAL POINTS *(Total of above 2 lines)*	260	147	0	0	0

Site Selected: Existing Corridor	Date Of Selection 7/30/95	Was A Local Site Assessment Used? Yes ☒ No ☐

Reason For Selection:

Soil Survey has been completed between time of first request (7/12/93) and latest request (11/29/01).

(See Instructions on reverse side) Form AD-1006 (10-83)

This form was electronically produced by National Production Services Staff

APPENDIX C

SHPO CONCURRENCE LETTER/DOE

AL
Jon

U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Montana Division
301 South Park Street, Room 448
Drawer 10056
Helena, Montana 59626-0056

January 13, 1998

Don Klima, Director
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
12136 West Bayaud Ave., Suite 330
Lakewood, Colorado 80226

Subject: STPP 6-1(56)62
Weeksville - West
Control No. 2014

Dear Mr. Klima:

Enclosed is the Determination of Effect and SHPO correspondence regarding the above project. The Montana Department of Transportation determined, and the SHPO concurred, that the proposed project would have **No Adverse Effect** to the NRHP-eligible barn at the Trudgen Place (24SA346), Diehl Barn (24SA347), the Weeksville/Sears Site (24SA155) and the Bad Rock Trail (24SA343) in Sanders County, Montana. We request your concurrence.

If you have any questions, please contact Jon Axline at the Montana Department of Transportation. He can be reached at (406) 444-6258.

Sincerely,

Dale W. Paulson
Environmental Coordinator

Enclosure

cc:
MDT - Jon Axline

MDT Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001

Marc Racicot, Governor

MASTER FILE COPY

January 12, 1998

Dale Paulson
Environmental & Project Development Engineer
Federal Highway Administration
301 South Park, Drawer 10056
Helena, MT 59626-0056

Subject: STPP 6-1(56)62
Weeksville - West
Control No. 2014

Enclosed is the Determination of Effect and correspondence for the above project. SHPO concurred with our Determination of No Adverse Effect regarding four sites within the Area of Potential Effect for the above project. Please finalize the enclosed draft letter to the Advisory Council and forward the package to the Council for its concurrence at your earliest convenience.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 444-6258.

Jon Axline
Jon Axline, historian
Environmental Services

Enclosures

cc: James Weaver, P.E., Missoula District Administrator
Carl Peil, P.E., Preconstruction Bureau
Gordon Stockstad, Resources Bureau
Susan Kilcrease, Engineering Services

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JAN 07 1998

ENVIRONMENTAL

MONTANA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

NHPA Section 106 \ Other Consultation

This form constitutes a record of your consultation with the Montana Historic Preservation Officer on a particular project and is the official SHPO reply. The dates of SHPO actions appear in the appropriate boxes.

Please Route This Form To:	MDT Jon Axline
Your Agency Requested Consultation with the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on this Project under this Law or Regulation:	**Section 106**

PROJECT NUMBER	STPP 6-1(56)62	**AGENCY**	MDT	**OTHER Agency**	
PROJECT NAME and Other Descriptions	Weeksville - West	**Dates and Separate Requests to SHPO on This Project**	12/19/97	Stan	

THIS FORM documents	1	**individual actions.**
Memo(s) to Sender	We concur in each of your findings.	

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY The SHPO Has Considered Whether, per Your Request, Sites Either Meet or Do Not Meet the Criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. The Finding of the SHPO Is as Follows:	**Sites which Meet National Register Criteria**		**Sites Not Meeting National Register Criteria**	

Criterion A Findings	**Criterion B Findings**	**Criterion C Findings**	**Criterion D Findings**

DETERMINATIONS OF EFFECT The shpo has considered whether this undertaking will have an affect on significant historic properties. The finding of the shpo is as follows:	**No Eligible or Listed Properties Are Within the Area of**		**The Project Will Have NO EFFECT on These**	
	Potential Effect		**Eligible Properties**	24SA348, 24SA346

Descriptions of Effects on Eligible Property Using 36 CFR 800.9		**The Effect on These Properties Is:**	
		Adverse	

		Not Adverse.	**24SA346, 24SA347, 24SA155 and 24SA343**
Other Comments:			
Reviewer Signatures	Stan Wilmoth **Stan Wilmoth, Ph.D.** **HPO**	**01/05/98**	**Dates**

State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
102 Broadway • P.O. Box 201202 • Helena, MT 59620-1202 • 406/444-7715

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ENVIROMENTAL BUREAU

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August 18, 1993

Edrie Vinson, Chief
Environmental and Hazardous Waste
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

RE: Weeksville - West
F 6-1(56)62

Dear Edrie:

This was an interesting and well prepared report. We will offer specific findings first, followed by some general recommendations.

24~~R~~sA155, Weeksville/Sears: **We concur both components are eligible under Criterion D.**

24~~R~~sA343, Bad Rock Trail: **We concur this important travel path will qualify under A and D.** Unless significant construction features remain which are not described, we tend to agree that integrity limits eligibility under C. We do recommend consideration of historic landscape values for the trail, and are strongly concerned with the lack of documentation of Native American consultation. We believe additional efforts should be directed toward tribal involvement, especially with some potential for encountering burial areas and some hint of possible Traditional Cultural Property issues.

24SA348, N.P. Railway, Eddy - Weeksville: **We concur this segment of the railroad will qualify under Criterion A, and that the stone arch bridge feature, at least, is also eligible under C.** Indeed, for a line :... judged to be the most difficult division in the entire... line to construct..." (p.14), perhaps the Clark Fork Division and specifically this segment should be eligible under C in its entirety? Criterion B eligibility, in our estimation, has not been sufficiently demonstrated at this time.

24SA345, Munson Dump: **We concur that features 3 and 4 retain sufficient integrity, associations and information potential to be eligible under Criterion D.** If specific association with road and/or railroad construction could be established, we think the pit itself might qualify under A.

24SA1084, prehistoric: Treatment of this property is confusing, and didn't do much in terms of defining the property or establishing its potential. Testing better oriented to the recorded site and the path of the road would have made more sense to us, and would have better demonstrated the site lies outside the area of potential effect. Should questions remain, we recommend additional testing. Until then, we do not feel we have sufficient information to resolve eligibility at this time.

24SA344, G-1 Dump: **We cannot determine eligibility from the information provided.** 1950s trash could be explained by the dump's proximity to present and past roads, or even the railroad. We recommend the depressions be tested for structural and other information potential if impact is to occur, and that additional County records (e.g., property and deed records, not just tax records) be checked for information.

24SA342, Cole Ranch: Integrity has been greatly diminished by post-historic additions. Criterion B eligibility has not been documented to date. We concur this site is not eligible.

24SA341, Lawyer Nursery: We concur the amount of infill has diminished associative potential and structural changes have diminished other integrities to the extent that this property is not eligible.

24SA346, Trudgen Place: Feature 4, the barn demonstrating reuse of wagon wheel scarred bridge timbers does seem intact and unique enough to qualify individually under Criterion C. We concur the property as a whole is not eligible. The piece of road is also nice. Were additional County records or local histories checked to try and confirm use of the barn as a stage stop?

24SA347, Diehl Barn: We concur this building is eligible under Criterion C. We think there is good potential for the whole to qualify under Criterion A, too, once recorded.

Finally, this road traverses some historically important areas with poorly defined real locations. We invite your thoughts about whether this is a project which should have an 800.11(a) treatment plan in place, given the number, potential importance and possible sensitivity of unknown site locations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Kathy

Katherine M. Huppe
Historical Survey Reviewer

Stan Wilmoth

Stan Wilmoth, Ph.D
Archaeologist

File: Comp/ MDOT project file
CD/ 24SA155, 24SA343, 24SA348, 24SA345,24SA346, 24SA347

State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
Mailing Address: 225 North Roberts • Helena, MT 59620-1201
Office Address: 102 Broadway • Helena, MT • (406) 444-7715

October 29, 1992

MASTER
FILE
COPY

Dennis Unsworth
Public Affairs Office
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-9726

RE: Weeksville - West, STPP 6-1(56)62

Dear Mr. Unsworth:

Thank you for notifying this office of your plans to develop this highway reconstruction project. To assist in your planning, a cultural resource file search was conducted to determine what, if any, properties have been recorded in the general area that may need consideration. We ran the search using the following legal descriptions:

S. 2, 3, 4, T20N, R27W
S. 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, T21N, R27W
S. 25, T21N, R28W

No sites currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places are located in the project area. There are two prehistoric occupation sites recorded in sections shown above, but it is not possible to ascertain whether they might be affected by the project. In accordance with 36CFR800, a systematic cultural resource inventory of the project's area of potential environmental impact should be undertaken to identify/evaluate the effects upon these sites or any heretofore undiscovered properties.

We also checked our Cultural Resource Annotated Bibliography System (CRABS) for information on previous survey work carried out within the above-listed sections. A copy of the computer print-out is attached–this may be useful background information for formulating a cultural resource survey strategy tailored to this proposed project.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment at this stage of project planning. Please contact us if further information is needed.

Sincerely,

Diana L Vanek

Diana L. Vanek
Archaeologist

Attach.

cc: Jon Axline w/attach.

APPENDIX D

AGENCY COMMENTS

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

P. O. Box 35
Thompson Falls, MT 59873
(406) 827-4389

6 February 2001

Mr. Steve Prinzing
Neil Consultants, Inc.
P.O. Box 6350
Great Falls, MT 59406-6350

Dear Steve,

Concerning the proposed reconstruction of State Highway 200 called Weeksville-West I still have problems with sheep being attracted to vegetation along highway right-of-ways. I like the proposed plan to revisit the sheep/vehicle issue post construction and determine if there are still chronic mortality zones. But, I am concerned that once vegetation is established and to then alter this vegetation would require the use of herbicides. This gives the new seeding a better opportunity to establish without the competition from existing vegetation. However, the practice of applying herbicide to existing vegetation may be highly controversial. I recommend planting an as yet undetermined mix of vegetation that may not attract sheep to the area immediately after construction is completed. This seeding should be for the entire length of bighorn habitat located in the project area. This would effectively eliminate the application of any herbicide. I will have to research if there is any vegetation, or seed, available that sheep will not tolerate. That is a very big question. They consume about all species of forbs and grasses that grow in this area. If you think that we will not have a problem with using herbicide, then we have some more time to try and determine a least preferred species of grass for the right-of-way. Also, the MDOT has new guidelines that require seeding of vegetation to the edge of the pavement. In this case it would be highly recommended to not seed to the pavement. If we can keep sheep even three feet from the pavement we may have fewer vehicle/sheep collisions. I would like to see a reduction in topsoil for the first three feet past the pavement, can gravel be used, and then apply the topsoil at the three-foot area where vegetation can be established. Let me know if this is workable and thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Bruce Sterling
Area Wildlife Biologist

United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Lolo National Forest
Building 24
Fort Missoula
Missoula, MT 59801

RECEIVED
OCT 22 1997
ENVIRONMENTAL

Reply to: 2730

Date: 10/20/97

MASTER FILE COPY

cc: Jim Weaver
Joe Alline
Consultant Design

Joel M. Marshik, P.E., Manager
Environmental Services
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
P.O. Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001

Dear Mr. Marshik:

This is in response to your August 8 letter regarding STPP 6-1(56)62, Weeksville-West, control no. 2014. Your requested response is in three areas as follows:

A. National Forest lands adjoining this proposed project may be classified as "Section 4(f) lands" from the description you provided.

1. The Munson Creek Trailhead may be considered a recreation site.

2. All National Forest lands in the project area are considered "winter range" and managed as such under the Forest Plan.

3. Your section 106 (National Historic Preservation Act) review of the project area will be more comprehensive than any information we have available in determining if sites exist within or adjacent to the project area.

4. All National Forest lands adjoining this proposed project are managed for multiple use, including recreation and/or wildlife management.

B. We will need to review specific proposals for acquisition of additional land use authorizations to cross National Forest lands in the project area in order to respond. In principle, it appears that any proposed needs can probably be accommodated with the consideration of possible mitigation measures.

C. Frank Grover will serve as the Forest Service coordinator for this project. You may contact him by telephone at 406/329-3799 or at the above letterhead address.

In addition, please see the enclosed copy of a November 12, 1992 letter detailing our resource management concerns relative to the proposed project. With respect to item 1, we have completed our acquisition of highway front lands in the Munson Creek area. Jon Dunlop and Marc Childress presented our needs for a public off-highway access near Munson Creek at your August 7 meeting in Kalispell. This item remains our most significant concern in regards to highway reconstruction in this area. We will agree to abandon the existing access immediately east of the small private parcel at Munson Creek in return for the MDT recognizing and constructing an appropriate vehicle access just west of Munson Creek which will allow development of a public access trailhead on the bench west of Munson Creek, as discussed at the August 7 meeting. The access point proposed would replace an existing highway approach at the farm gate immediately west of Munson Creek, which does not show on the preliminary plat we received. We will locate and survey our desired access road to avoid the buried water line transmission pipe which crosses under the highway in this area and provide this information to MDT for inclusion in final project plans . This information should be available by July 1, 1998.

Sincerely,

Charles C Wildes

CHARLES C. WILDES
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures

cc: Plains District Ranger

Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks

P.O. Box 1999
Thompson Falls, MT 59873

26 June 1997
Ref: PS054.97

Steve Prinzing
Neil Consultants
4509 N. Star Blvd.
Great Falls, MT 59406

Dear Steve:

Enclosed is the information from which I gathered recommendations for the box culvert in Weeksville Creek. I have included it for your information and to illustrate designs. The species of concern is westslope cutthroat trout that migrate up Weeksville Creek in April and May, which may include high flow periods. As mentioned in our phone conversation, the culvert at Munson Creek will not require fish passage.

The following are my recommendations for the Weeksville Creek culvert:

1) Because the box culvert is greater than 30 m, a baffle system is required to provide resting areas for fish. Figure 8.15 illustrates a common design. I recommend only the 30 degree baffles be used on one side.

2) With baffles the preferred velocity requirement is 4 to 6 m/s (as estimated without baffles), or as slow as possible given the flow of the creek and slope of the culvert.

Providing passage into Weeksville Creek has risks as well as benefits to westslope cutthroat trout. There is a potential that passage will allow exotic species to hybridize or compete with the native westslope cutthroat trout. Because the road planning and design will take many years, new information or state policy may direct me to not recommend improved fish passage. Therefore, I would like the opportunity to comment on the installation of the culvert before the final decision is made. I also recommend that you consider an alternative culvert design similar to the present one or without special passage features.

Sincerely,

Pat

Patrick Saffel
Fisheries Biologist

Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Box 35
Thompson Falls, MT 59873
827-4389

22 December 1993

Mitch Stelling
Neil Consultants Inc.
P.O. Box 6350
Great Falls, MT 59406-6350

Dear Mitch,

Thanks for sending the information on the highway design around the bad rock curve. The following comments pertain.

Bighorn sheep are excellent climbers and jumpers. I have witnessed a sheep (under very excited conditions) from a near standing position clear a 10 foot corral trap panel. I believe a minimum of eight feet is required to prevent sheep from easily clearing an obstacle, six feet would probably prevent the majority from trying, particularly if there is no reason to do so. The slope on the retaining wall between the catchment area and the highway needs to be as vertical and smooth as possible to prevent sheep from climbing the concrete wall.

There are two options with regard to the rock catchment area. I think the best alternative is to not plant any vegetation in this area and possible sterilize the ground to prevent any natural vegetation from growing. This will prevent sheep use in the immediate area except for movement. The other option is to plant a tall grass species such as orchard or timothy. Sheep prefer low growing grass species, although they will eat all grass species in the spring. Trying to find a non-palatable grass species is difficult since sheep eat just about anything. We need to discuss what options there are regarding vegetation planted along the highway right-of-way after completion of the entire project.
The Department would strongly recommend pull-outs both east and west of the bad rock area.

Could you send me the fence specs you mentioned used at airports to prevent animal movement? This is a very quick response and I hope it makes some sense. Please keep me informed of your progress and if I can be of additional help, give me a call.

Sincerely,

Bruce Sterling
Wildlife Biologist

Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks

P.O. Box 35
Thompson Falls, MT 59873
13 January 1993

Les R. Reichelt
Wildlife Biologist
312 Juniper
Glendive, MT 59330

Dear Les,

Sorry for the delay in sending this information but things are hectic as usual.

Wildlife species found in the vicinity of the highway reconstruction project between Munson Creek and Weeksville Creek are: Golden eagles nesting on the cliffs north of the highway, should not be impacted by the project, mule deer and white-tailed deer frequent the area and cross the highway in numerous locations, osprey nesting sites along the river corridor, should not be impacted, the Clark Fork River is good quality bald eagle winter range, several eagles have been observed in the project area but should not be impacted by the project, no known bald eagle nesting sites are within the project length, eagles do nest in other areas of the river system so the potential is there for balds to nest in the project area, if this were to occur I would expect severe construction restrictions during the nesting period, elk cross the highway between mile marker 62.9 and 63.1.

The biggest concern I have is with bighorn sheep. Since December, 1987 through May, 1992 a total of 108 bighorns have died from vehicle or train collisions. Data on total numbers killed is accurate but the sex, age, and location information is more sketchy. Not all numbers will add up to 108. Through spring 1992: 40 ewes (54%), 18 lambs (24%), and 16 rams (22%) have been killed. Cause of mortality is 58 (77%) by vehicles and 17 (23%) by train. Ninety-seven percent of the mortality, from all sources, occurs December through April. The problem seems to be increasing, 55% of the mortality has occurred in the last two years. The worst year for mortality was in the winter of 1990 through the following spring when 35 bighorn sheep were lost.

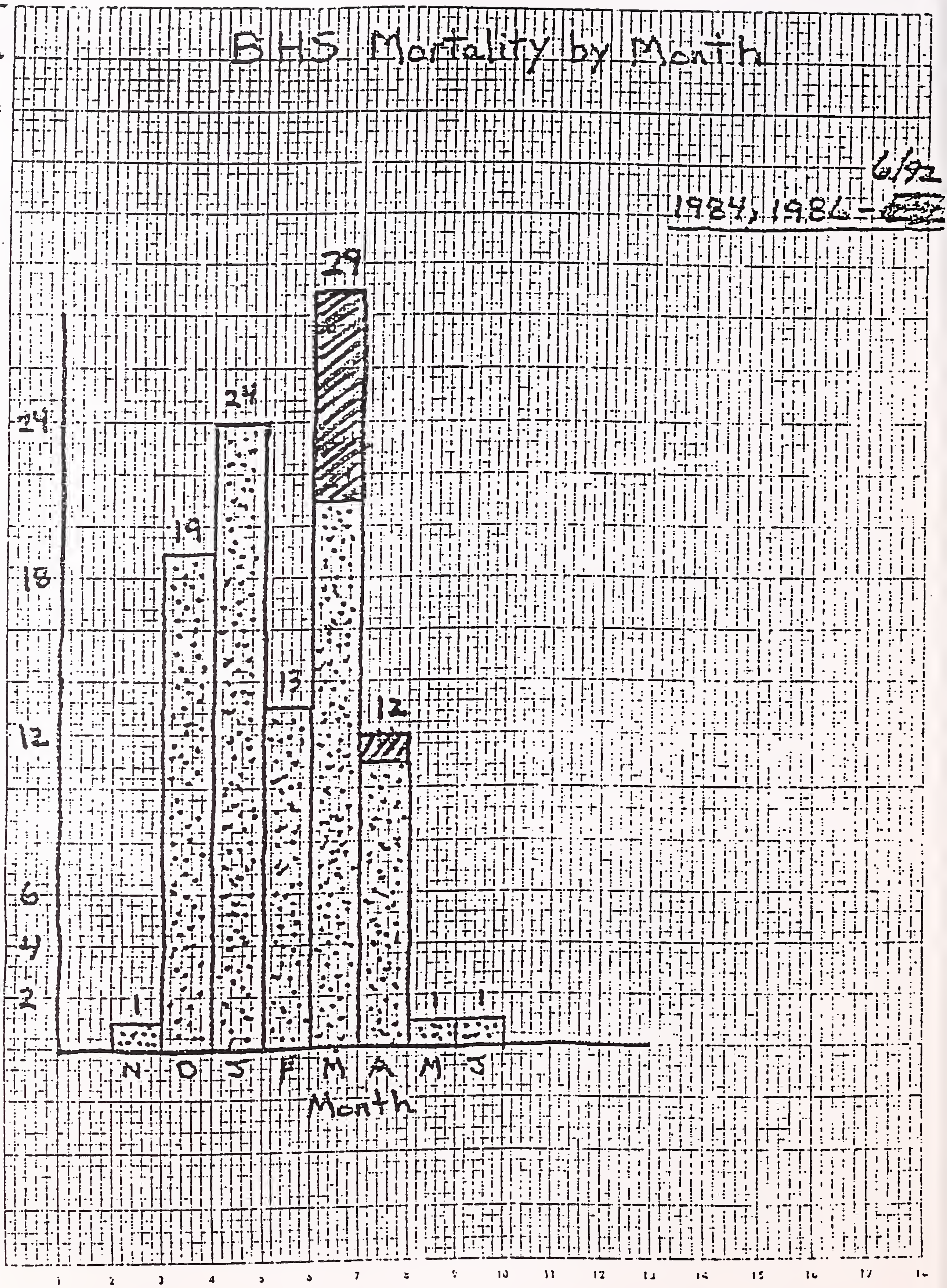
This brings us to the critical question: What are we doing about it? Recently we came to an agreement with the Department of Transportation to erect large warning signs along with lighted caution signs at critical areas (poles are erected, but no signs to date). Hopefully this will help to inform the public of the problem and to drive defensively. But, this is not the long term solution. Ideas range from planting the highway right-of-way with a nonpalatable, or at least a species not preferred by sheep, grass to hiring a herder to haze sheep from the highway. One method that needs to be pursued is the planting of an intercept crop around mile marker 65 on the north side of Highway 200. This would require heavy equipment along with the removal of trees and rocks, topsoil would have to be placed and the area seeded to a high quality grass like bluebunch wheat grass. This option would require large dollars and written into the highway construction contract under bighorn sheep mitigation. Fencing may be an option in some limited areas, but I don't think it will work well and has the potential to be maintenance heavy and the possibility is there to trap sheep between the fence and the highway.

As you can see there is no quick and easy fix to the problem. I'm always open to any suggestions.

I hope this information is helpful. If I can be of any additional help just give me a call at 827-4389.

Sincerely,

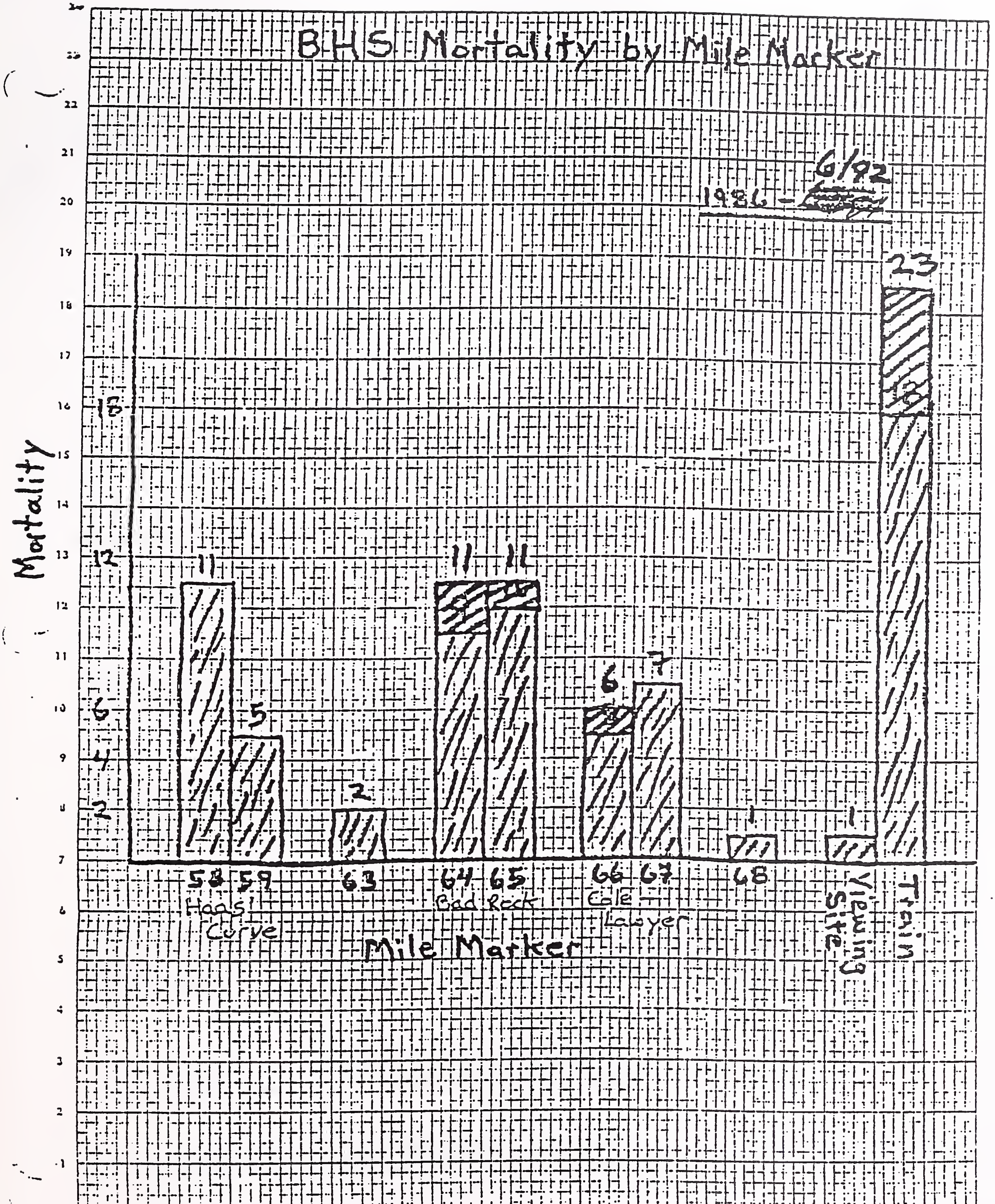
Bruce Sterling
Wildlife Biologist



BHS Mortality by Month

6/92

1984, 1986-[illegible]


BHS Mortality by Mile Marker
1986 - 6/92
Mortality
18
12
6
4
2
11
5
2
11
11
6
7
1
1
23
58
59
Haas'
Curve
63
64
65
Bad Rock
66
67
Cole
Lawyer
68
Viewing Site
Train
Mile Marker

United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Lolo National Forest
Building 24
Fort Missoula
Missoula, MT 59801

Reply to: 2730

Date: December 24,1992

Dennis J. Unsworth
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-9726

Dear Dennis:

This letter is in response to your letter dated October 19,1992 concerning Weeksville - West, Sanders County STPP 6-1(56)62 Highway Project.

The following are our comments concerning your proposal to improve Montana Highway 200 in the vicinity of Weeksville Creek.

1. We are in the process of acquiring property at the mouth of Munson Creek for a new trail head. This is likely to result in the need for a new highway access point on the north side of the highway, immediately west of Munson Creek., within the next 2-3 years.

2. We would like to see the two turn-outs shown on the attached map maintained as they provide parking and access to the National Forest for hunters and other recreationists. Exact location are not critical, as long as they occur in areas where the highway right-of-way is passing through National Forest ownership.

3. The entire project is within a Bald Eagle recovery area (a federally listed threatened and endangered species). The main concern would be blasting during the nesting period. There are currently no known nests in the area. However, we suggest you contact the State Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks to survey the area prior to construction for any necessary mitigation measures.

4. The Department of Transportation should continue to work with the State Department of Fish and Wildlife Department to try to reduce Bighorn sheep mortality of this section of the highway.

5. If any work is done as far west as the sheep viewing site, please review site distance, highway signing, and the turn out area at the present sheep viewing site to ensure it is adequate to provide for public safety.

If you have additional questions concerning this project or these comments, please contact Plains/T-Falls District Ranger Dick Smith (phone 826-3821).

Sincerely,

ORVILLE L. DANIELS
Forest Supervisor

(35)

DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
Solid and Hazardous Waste Bureau
Solid Waste Program
(406) 444-1430

STAN STEPHENS, GOVERNOR

FAX #(406) 444-1499

STATE OF MONTANA

OFFICE LOCATION: 836 Front Street
Helena, Montana

MAILING ADDRESS: Cogswell Building
Helena, MT 59620

November 24, 1992

MASTER FILE COPY

Dennis J. Unsworth, Chief
Public Affairs Bureau
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-9726

SUBJECT: Weeksville-West, Sanders County STPP 6-1(56)62

Dear Dennis:

I am in receipt of your October 19, 1992 letter soliciting comment and suggestion from our Bureau concerning the above project.

Our only comment would be that any construction or demolition material generated from the project that is not reusable, recyclable, or otherwise utilized toward a beneficial end use, and is regarded as a solid waste, must be disposed of at a licensed landfill capable of handling that type of material.

If contaminated soils are encountered during the course of the project, they should be characterized and handled appropriately. If the DOT has any questions concerning proper disposal of solid wastes or the handling of contaminated soils, please feel free to contact our program.

Sincerely,

Edward A. Thamke
Solid Waste Program

H:\...\letter\MDOTPAB.N20
File: HB660-General Correspondence

"AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER"

34

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, OMAHA DISTRICT
215 NORTH 17TH STREET
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68102-4978

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

November 17, 1992

MASTER
FILE
COPY

Planning Division

Mr. Dennis J. Unsworth
Chief, Public Affairs Bureau
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620-9726

Dear Mr. Unsworth:

We have reviewed the proposed reconstruction/improvement on Montana Highway 200 in Sanders County, Montana, reference STPP 6-1(56)62, and we offer the following comments.

The design of the proposed project should ensure that the project is in compliance with flood plain management criteria of Sanders County and the State of Montana. As a minimum, the design should insure that the 100-year flood water surface elevation of any stream affected is not increased more than one foot relative to pre-project conditions. It is desirable, however, that water surface elevations either remain the same or decrease as a result of this project.

If you have not already done so, we recommend that you consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the state agency responsible for fish and wildlife resources. In addition, the State Historic Preservation Office should be contacted for information and recommendations on potential cultural resources in the project area.

It appears that some of the construction could take place in waterways or wetlands which are classified as waters of the United States and are therefore regulated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. If construction activities involve the temporary or permanent placement of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, a Section 404 permit may be required. For a detailed review of the permit requirements, final project plans should be sent to:

Mr. Robert McInerney
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
c/o DNRC/CDD
1520 East 6th Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620-2301

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Jeanette Conley of our staff at (402) 221-3133. Thank you for the opportunity to review this proposal.

Sincerely,

Gerard E

Richard D. Gorton
Chief, Environmental
Analysis Branch
Planning Division

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Plains/Thompson Falls Ranger District
P. O. Box 429
Plains, Montana 59859

REPLY TO: 2730

DATE: November 12, 1992

SUBJECT: Proposed Weeksville - West Hwy Improvement - MDOT

TO: Forest Supervisor, Orville Daniels

Following are my comments to the Montana Department of Transportation plan to improve Montana Highway 200 in the vicinity of Weeksville Creek.

1. We are in the process of acquiring property at the mouth of Munson Creek for a new trail head. This is likely to result in the need for a new highway access point on the north side of the highway, immediately west of Munson Creek, within the next 2-3 years.

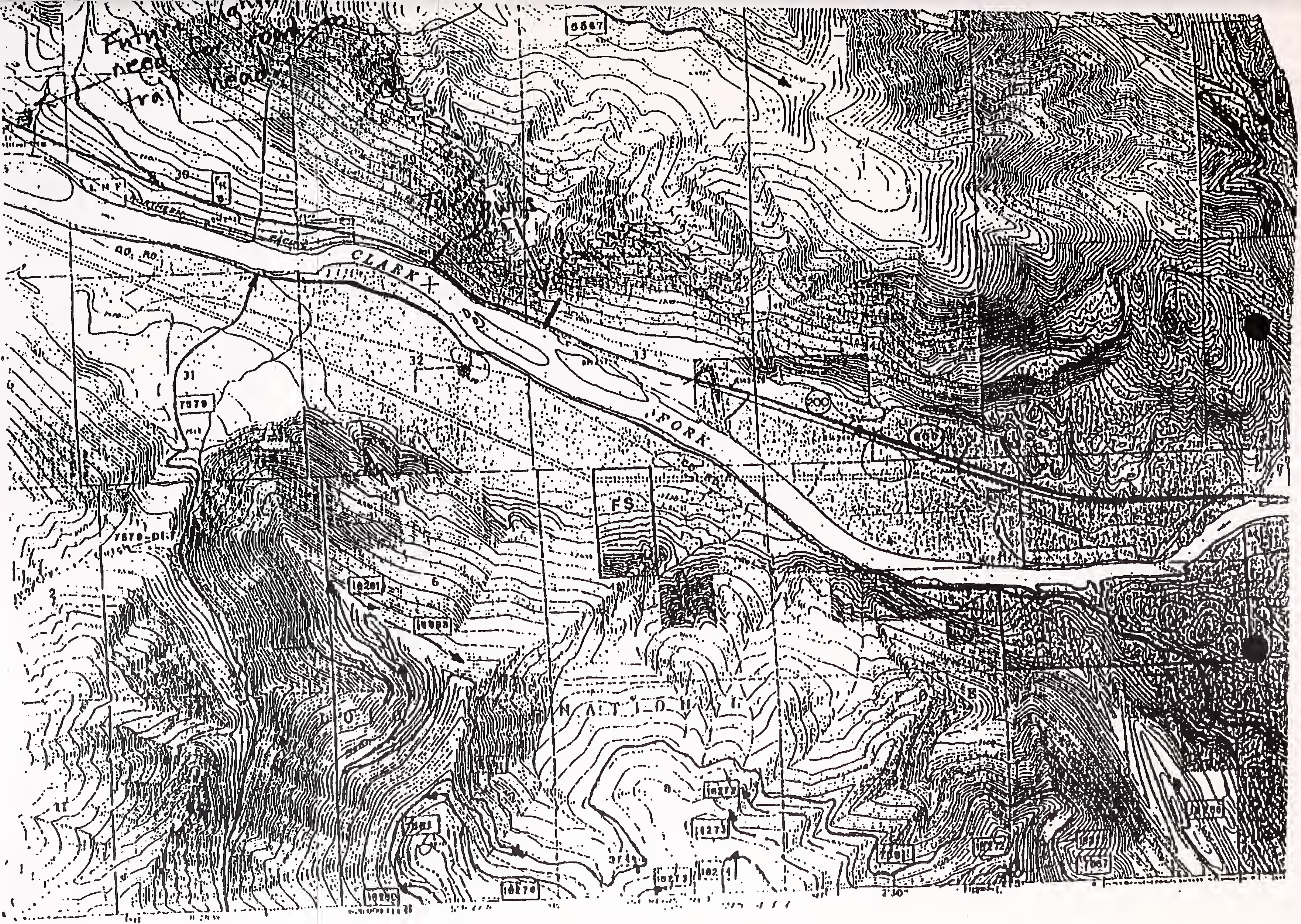
2. I would like to see the two turn-outs shown on the attached map maintained as they provide parking and access to the National Forest for hunters and other recreationists. Exact locations are not critical, as long as they occur in areas where the highway right-of-way is passing through National Forest ownership.

3. The entire project is within a Bald Eagle recovery area (a federally listed T & E species). The main concern would be blasting during the nesting period. There are currently no known nests in the area. However, the area should be surveyed by a State Fish & Wildlife or Forest Service Biologist prior to starting construction for any necessary mitigation measures.

4. The Department of Transportation should continue to work with the State Department of Fish and Wildlife Department to try to reduce Bighorn sheep mortality of this section of the highway.

5. If any work is done as far west as the sheep viewing site, please review site distance, highway signing, and the turn out area at the present sheep viewing site to ensure it is adequate to provide for public safety.

Richard A Smith
RICHARD A. SMITH
District Ranger



CLARK
FORK
CO. RD.
FS
200
7579
10201
10893
10273
10277
N A T I O N A L
F O R E S T

Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

November 9, 1992
Ref: JH15.93

TO: Ken Chrest

FROM: Joe Huston

SUBJECT: Weeksville - West, Sanders Co. STPP6-1(56)62

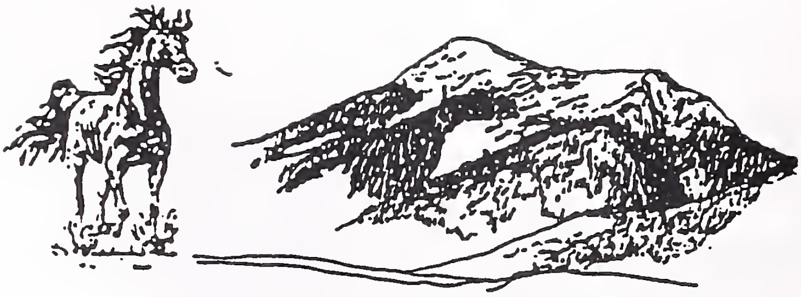
This section of road being considered for reconstruction crosses two small streams, Weeksville and Munson creeks and is adjacent to the Clark Fork River. However, the Montana Rail Link main railroad track lies between the highway and the river throughout the entire length.

Road reconstruction should not affect the Clark Fork River in the slightest. Culverts (either new or extensions of existing) should be designed to allow fish passage in both Weeksville and Munson creeks.

The major environmental effect of reconstruction will be its positive or negative effects on big game animals, most notable the bighorn sheep.

/ss

31



Town of Plains

P.O. BOX 567
PLAINS, MONTANA 59859

(406) 826-3411

November 5, 1992

MASTER
FILE
COPY

Dennis J. Unsworth, Chief
Public Affairs Bureau
Montana Dept. of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT. 59620-9726

Dear Dennis:

In reply to your letter of October 19, 1992 asking for comments for or against the Weeksville - West, Sanders County project: I am pleased to report that I read your letter to the Town Council and they are very much in favor of the project. They know of no environmental problems that would affect this project.

You may also want to contact the Plains Chamber of Commerce, Plains Grange and Plains Lions Club for other comments.

Sincerely,

William M Holland

William M. Holland
Mayor

WMH/vot

DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

AIR QUALITY BUREAU

STAN STEPHENS, GOVERNOR

COGSWELL BUILDING

STATE OF MONTANA

HELENA, MONTANA 59620

(406) 444-3454
FAX # (406) 444-1374

November 2, 1992

Mr. Dennis Unsworth
Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-9726

Dear Mr. Unsworth:

This is in response to your letter of notification regarding the highway improvement project designated as Weeksville-West, Sanders County, STPP 6-1(56)62.

In general, any project which will smooth out the traffic flow, and reduce stopping and idling time will also reduce the amount of air pollution emissions from transportation sources. From this standpoint the Air Quality Bureau would like to support your efforts to upgrade the Montana highway system. Asphalt plants and gravel crushers are the primary emission sources for highway construction, and they must obtain an air quality permit from our office to operate in the state.

Sincerely,

Warren Norton

Warren Norton
Environmental Specialist

WN:kmj

"AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER"

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Pacific Northwest Region
Federal Building & U.S. Courthouse
Box 043-550 West Fort Street
Boise, Idaho 83724-0043

IN REPLY REFER TO:

PN-420

OCT 26 1992

MASTER
FILE
COPY

Mr. Dennis J. Unsworth
Chief, Public Affairs Bureau
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena MT 59620-9726

Subject: Weeksville - West, Sanders County, Highway 200, Federal-Aid Highway Project, STPP 6-1(56)62 (General Correspondence Realty)

Dear Mr. Unsworth:

The Bureau of Reclamation has no land interests in the vicinity of the subject proposed highway project, nor do we anticipate any Reclamation project activities in that area which would impact the project.

Thank you for inviting us to comment on your proposal.

Sincerely,

Max E. VanDenBerg

Regional Supervisor of
Water, Power, and Lands

21

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION VIII, MONTANA OFFICE
FEDERAL BUILDING, 301 S. PARK, DRAWER 10096
HELENA, MONTANA 59626-0096

MASTER
FILE
COPY

Ref: 8MO

October 22, 1992

Dennis J. Unsworth
Public Affairs Bureau
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620-9726

Re: Federal Aid Highway Project
Weeksville-West
STPP 6-1(56)62

Dear Mr. Unsworth:

This is in response to your letter of October 19, 1992, notifying the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Montana Office of the intention of the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to develop a Federal Aid highway project on Montana Highway 200 in Sanders County, Montana.

The proposed project includes the reconstruction of 6.7 miles of the existing roadway to current standards of design/ safety and to replace the worn-out pavement. Centerline will be adjusted to straighten and flatten the curves and hills.

The map accompanying your notice of intent indicated that the proposed project may encroach upon riparian wetlands at several locations. The EPA requests that the MDT evaluate the impacts to riparian wetlands of the proposed project, avoid impacts to wetlands wherever possible, and provide appropriate mitigation for unavoidably impacted wetlands in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Montana Interagency Wetlands Group Memorandum of Understanding.

The EPA also requests that all appropriate pollution and erosion control measures are provided for during project planning and design. These measures should be implemented during construction to assure protection of water quality and aquatic habitat. It would appear that this project will have impact on sensitive areas that will require protective attention.

The EPA would ask that all required permits be so stated for this project. As an example, this would include the new storm water regulations (effective October 1, 1992).

If you require further EPA input at this time, please contact Jeff Bryan of my staff at 406-449-5486.

Sincerely,

John F. Wardell, Director
Montana Office

cc: Bill Engle, 8MO

United States Department of the Interior

TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
FISH AND WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT
FEDERAL BUILDING, US COURTHOUSE
301 S PARK, P O BOX 10023
HELENA MT 59626

IN REPLY REFER TO:

M.44 (I)
(Weeksville - West)
(Twin Bridges - North)

July 21, 1992

Les R. Reichelt
312 Juniper
Glendive, MT 59330

Dear Mr. Reichelt:

This responds to your June 22, 1992 letter concerning Montana Department of Transportation projects STPP 6-(NP)62, Weeksville - West (Control #2014) and STPP 29-1(NP)43, Twin Bridges - North (Control #2018), which requested Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) input pertaining to threatened and endangered (T/E) species that may occur in the project areas. Your letter was received by the Service's Montana State Office on June 24, 1992.

The Federally-listed T/E species which occur or may occur within the project areas are the grizzly bear (Ursus arctos horribilis), bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus), peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus) and gray wolf (Canis lupus) for the Weeksville - West project and the bald eagle and peregrine falcon for the Twin Bridges - North project. If a biological assessment is prepared for these projects, the Service recommends it include the following:

1. a description of the project;
2. a description of the specific area that may be affected by the action;
3. the current status, habitat use and behavior of T/E species in the project area;
4. discussion of the methods used to determine the information in item 3;
5. an analysis of the effects of the proposed action on listed species and proposed species and their habitats, including an analysis of any cumulative effects (see Section 402.02 50 CFR, Part 402);
6. coordination/mitigation measures that will reduce/eliminate adverse impacts to T/E species;
7. the expected status of T/E species in the future (short and long term during and after project completion);

8. a determination of the project effects on listed species;

9. a determination of "is likely to jeopardize" or "is not likely to jeopardize" for proposed species; and

10. documentation of the basis of all conclusions, such as the data considered and the citation of literature and personal contacts used in developing the assessment.

If it is determined that the proposed project is likely to adversely affect any listed species, formal consultation should be initiated with this office. If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact Scott Jackson of my staff at (406)449-5225.

Sincerely,

Dale R. Harms
State Supervisor
Montana State Office

SDJ/sdj

cc: FWS, FWE, Kalispell Suboffice, Attn: Kevin Shelley

"Take Pride in America"

MONTANA NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM

1515 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620
(406) 444-3009

June 30, 1992

Les R. Reicheit
312 Juniper
Glendive, MT 59330

Dear Mr. Reichelt:

This is in response to your request of 22 June for information on sensitive species in the vicinity of two highways projects: Silver Star-Twin Bridges (SR 287), and Weeksville-west (SR 200).

I have enclosed a report on a heron rookery located near Twin Bridges. Otherwise, we have no records of sensitive species in either project area.

Please remember that the results of a data search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program are not intended as a final statement on sensitive species within a given area, or as a substitute for on-site surveys needed for environmental assessments.

Sincerely,

Cedron Jones

Cedron Jones, Data Assistant

The Nature Conservancy and Montana State Library serving you with pride

Montana Department of Transportation

2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena MT 59620-1001

David A. Galt, Director
Judy Martz, Governor

January 17, 2002

MONTANA STATE LIBRARY
1515 EAST 6TH AVENUE
P O BOX 201800
HELENA, MT 59620-1800

Re: Weeksville – West
Environmental Assessment for Public Comment
STPP 6-1(56)62, CN 2014

Dear Commissioners:

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) plans to reconstruct 6.5 miles of Highway 200. The proposed project begins about 11 miles southeast of Thomson Falls and extends 6.5 miles east to the Weeksville Creek Crossing. As required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been developed to determine potential environmental impacts of this project.

Enclosed is the public-comment copy of the EA for public review. There will be a public meeting on the EA at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, February 6, 2002, at the Thompson Falls Senior Center, 1191 Mount Silcox Drive, Thompson Falls, Montana. The EA is subject to a 30-day public comment and review period from January 22, 2002 and ending on February 21, 2002. Please have this EA available for the public to review at some convenient location within your office.

Please tell the public that written comments on the EA should be mailed to:

Jean Riley, P.E.
Environmental Services
Montana Department of Transportation
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Thank you for agreeing to be public repository for this document. I appreciate you providing the facilities for the public to review the LetterEA.

Sincerely,

Jean A. Riley

Jean A. Riley, P.E.
Engineering Bureau Chief
Environmental Services

cc: Fred Bente
file

Environmental Services Unit
Phone: (406) 444-7228
Fax: (406) 444-7245

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Road Report: (800) 226-7623
TTY: (800) 335-7592